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PRACTICAL SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

VOL. II.

By GILBERT BURNET,
Late VICAR of *Coggeſhal* in *Eſſex*,
And MINISTER of St. *James's*, *Clerkenwell*.

Publiſhed for the BENEFIT of
His Two Helpleſs ORPHANS,
A SON of about Eight Years of Age,
AND
A DAUGHTER about Seven.

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23

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

ON THE

DEATH

OF THE

Rev. Mr. GILBERT BURNET,

Late VICAR of

COGGESHAL in *ESSEX*,

And MINISTER of

St. JAMES's, CLERKENWELL:

Who Died, *Jan.* 28, 1745-6, Aged 48.

TO applaud the *Hero*'s Toils, to paint his Cares,
His arduous Labours, and his num'rous Scars;
Scars, gain'd in *Liberty*'s diſtinguiſh'd Cauſe,
For pure *Religion*, or for upright *Laws*:
To brand the *Tyrant*, ſtigmatize the *Knave*;
To glad th' *Oppreſs'd*,—revive the drooping *Slave*;

On the Death of the Author.

To daſh a Bluſh o'er *Vice*'s ſpecious Face,
To ſtun the *Coward*, to diſplay the *Baſe*;
To fill, with *Merit*'s Charms, the Trump of *Fame*;
Raiſe to the Skies, each truly reverenc'd Name:
Or now—in ſorrowing *Elegy*—to mourn
The *Good*—the *Kind*—from our embraces torn,
The *Souls*—that caſt a Radiance on our Clay,
And hail their Progreſs to the *Realms of Day*:
Theſe are the *Muſe*'s Taſks—Illuſtrious Shade!
Accept her Homage—to thy Virtues paid.
She wails thy Loſs—her tuneful Grief will flow—
Will ſoothe our Hearts, depreſs'd with aching Woe;
Give thee *Exemplar*, to each weeping Friend,
And ſing the bliſsful Joys that crown thy End.

Methinks I view, whilſt Crowds admiring hung
On the dread Truths, that flouriſh'd on thy Tongue,
That Brow ſerene, that pleaſing Mien and Air,
That chear'd th' awakened *Sinner*'s black Deſpair:
As *Raphael*'s *Paul*, you look'd our Doubts away,
And dreary *Ignorance* felt th' enlight'ning Ray:
Pale *Bigotry* would then her Zeal ſuſpend,
And puzzled *Error*, find her Mazes end.

In calm Retreat, thy Studies ſtill, we find,
Were bent t' improve and benefit Mankind:

On the Death of the Author.

Immenſe the Pains! huge *Volumes* to ſurvey,
Their Energy—their Reas'ning to convey,
In ſuch an artleſs and familiar Way *!
Th' eternal Cauſe,—whence *Nature*'s Beauties ſpring,
Fountain of Light,—*Heaven*'s dread, immortal *King*,
Creation's wond'rous, ne'er exhauſted Store,
Unveil'd by thee—with Tranſport we adore:
E'en *Babes* may, now, their *Maker*'s Works proclaim,
And hail the Splendors of this glorious Frame.
Some *Angel*, ſure, inſpir'd the great Deſign,
And ſhed his Influence over ev'ry Line.
Exalted *Boyle!* whoſe Fame ſhall never die,
But endleſs Panegyrick ſtill ſupply,
In his wiſe Plan ſtill more diffuſe appears,
And mocks *Time*'s Rage, and ſwift increaſing Years:
Each honour'd *Sage*, whoſe Labours you explain,
Unform'd by you—w' had found thoſe Labours vain;
Lock'd up and quite conceal'd from *common* View,
Till modell'd, methodiz'd, made clear by you.

* He wrote an Abridgment of the Sermons at *Boyle*'s Lecture, in four Volumes, Octavo, which has univerſally met with a good Reception in our own Country; and abroad, has been tranſlated into *French*.

On the Death of the Author.

No one, like thee, was form'd for ſocial Joy,
Thy Converſe fraught with Wit that ne'er could cloy;
Extenſive Knowledge, unaffected, ſhone,
And made the Ears that heard thee all thy own;
Whilſt manly Senſe, with ſtrongeſt Reas'ning join'd,
Still caſt new Lights, thro' each attentive Mind.
Raptur'd we heard—and ſaw the ſhort'ning Day
Too ſoon withdraw, and veil his ſplendid Ray:
The Night ſucceeds—too brief to hear thee o'er;
We part impatient, ſtill deſire thee more.
Whate'er you taught, and whatſoe'er you knew,
You taught ſincerely, and you practis'd too:
Placid *Humanity*, with wonted Grace,
Dwelt in thy Breaſt, and triumph'd in thy Face:
Forſaken *Charity* laments thee dead,
And fair *Benevolence*, with drooping Head:
If ſuch thy Worth, then ſoaring from our View,
To Virtue, Honour, and to Reaſon true,
What vaſt Rewards await thee from above,
Unnumber'd Bleſſings in thy *Saviour*'s Love!

Cease then our Tears—that thus inceſſant fall,
When *Souls*, like thine, receive their final Call,
Soar to their Kindred *Saints*—where Joy ſerene,
And faithful Tranſports gild th' extatick Scene;
Leave the drear Manſions of this mortal Life,
For Plains ætherial, free from anxious Strife;

On the Death of the Author.

Regions of Bliſs—where Angels touch the Strings,
And with melodious Sounds the Concert rings,
To thee, *Almighty, firſt and laſt of Time,*
Enthron'd in endleſs Majeſty, ſublime.

YET—ſwells the *Muſe*—with long protracted Sighs—
Sad length'ned Pauſe—and piteous ſtreaming Eyes—
T' excite your Grief for *Infancy* diſtreſt,
And heave a Sob—in each parental Breaſt.
Ye, who the fondeſt Cares of *Fathers* know,
Matrons, who've felt th' excruciating Throe,
Attend her Numbers—ah! how vain your Cares,
Your wiſe Precautions, and your tender Fears!
Fate deals alike the whole Creation round,
No State ſecure, no ſtable Station found:
Now rais'd aloft on giddy *Fortune*'s Wheel,
Anon, a ſad Reverſe we yet may feel.
Ah! then, to leave expos'd an *Orphan Race*,
Wand'ring and weak, the *Subjects* of *Diſgrace!*
Dreadful the Thought! ah! view the *lovely Pair* *,
Shield them from Want—and ſnatch them from Deſpair:

* He left two helpleſs Orphans, a Son then about ſeven Years old, and a Daughter about ſix, whom Death had depriv'd of their Mother ſome Years before. They are utterly deſtitute and unprovided for; on which Account ſome Gentlemen were induced to publiſh this Collection of their late tender Father's Sermons, for the ſole Benefit of theſe innocent Babes.

On the Death of the Author.

Leave trivial Sports—avert the glutted Sight,
And here enjoy more true, ſincere Delight.
Kind Providence *ſwift* took their only Stay,
Nor gave to think—one melancholy Day:
Had lengthen'd Pains in Anguiſh robb'd his Breath,
How dire Reflection! drear the Pangs of Death!
But inſtantaneouſly * he felt the Smart,
Juſt clos'd his Eyes, receiv'd the deadly Dart.

Let not his *Offspring* feel the Stroke ſevere,
Nor ſhed, in vain, the ſupplicating Tear;
Aſſiſt the Culture of their op'ning Mind,
And future Burnets raiſe to bleſs Mankind.

* He died of an Apoplectick Fit.

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A ſmall Thing that the Righteous hath, is better than great Riches of the Ungodly.

THE Deſign of this Pſalm was to quiet and pacify the *Jews*, who were ſcandalized at ſeeing ſo many wicked Men happy and proſperous in the World, and ſo many good Men oppreſſed with Difficulties and Afflictions; contrary, as they thought, to their Law, which promiſes every Thing that is good, to thoſe who keep it, and threatens every Thing that is evil, to thoſe who break it. SERM. XXIV.

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To ſuch Murmurings, holy *David* anſwers, That he would not have them vex and fret themſelves at ſeeing the Proſperity of the Wicked, or impeach the Providence of God upon that Account; for all this Proſperity, which they looked upon with ſo envious an Eye, ſhould be of ſmall Continuance. They ſhould be cut down on a ſudden, as the Graſs is by the Hand of the Mower, and as the green Herb that withereth away. If they would but truſt in God, and do their Duty, they ſhould be happy in their ſmall Poſſeſſions, and enjoy ſecurely all thoſe Bleſſings that God hath promiſed to the Obſervers of his Law. And beſides, there is more Satisfaction in the little Pittance a righteous Man poſſeſſeth, than in the greateſt Abundance, acquired by Fraud, Cruelty, and Oppreſſion. *A ſmall Thing that the Righteous hath, is better than great Riches of the Ungodly*; or, as it is tranſlated in the other Verſion, *A little that the righteous Man hath, is better than the Riches of many Wicked.*

THE Words of the Text are capable of two Senſes: *Firſt*, That a ſmall Eſtate, honeſtly

honeſtly come by, is better than a great one, acquired by wicked and diſhoneſt Ways: And, *ſecondly*, That it is better to be a good Man, with a ſmall Eſtate, than to be wicked, with a large one, though honeſtly acquired, either by Labour, Chance, or Inheritance. I ſhall ſpeak a little diſtinctly to the *firſt*, and then conſider them both together. SERM. XXIV.

NOW, that a ſmall Eſtate, honeſtly come by, is better than a great one, acquired by wicked and diſhoneſt Ways, appears,

1*ſt*, BECAUSE the former is gotten with the Liking and Approbation of all good Men, who are pleaſed to ſee a Man careful and induſtrious in his Buſineſs, and, at the ſame Time, taking none but juſt and honeſt Courſes to promote himſelf in the World. Such a Man, they cannot help wiſhing good Luck, and contributing to his Proſperity. To thrive, they think, is ſo naturally due to honeſt Pains and indefatigable Labour, that when they ſee it otherwiſe, they are apt to charge Providence with ſome Injuſtice, or, at leaſt,

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with some Unkindness. But, when such Men prosper, they cannot help being delighted, and think, that then Things are as they should be: Whereas, when we see wicked Men endeavouring, by unrighteous Ways, to thrive and prosper in the World, we are so far from wishing them Success, that, on the contrary, we think it hard, that God should even suffer them to prosper; we are backward in lending them our Assistance, and are uneasy, that such vile Courses succeed.

Now, this must be a very great Delight and Satisfaction to good Men, to have the Prayers and good Wishes of the best of Mankind go along with them in their Endeavours; to find their Ways approved and blessed, by such as can consider, and best judge of them: And that it is so, appears from the Pains that bad Men take to be well thought of by Men better than themselves; which is a Proof, that the Reputation of Honesty and Goodness, is of great Use, as well as Delight; and that the Approbation and Esteem of good Men afford the Just great Satisfaction, though their

Success

Success in the World were not answerable to their Industry and Honesty. But, SERM. XXIV.

2*dly*, A SMALL Estate, honestly come by, is better than a large one, by dishonest Means, with respect to that *internal Peace* and *Quiet*, that *Satisfaction* and *Delight*, which accompanies a Man both in the Acquisition and Enjoyment of it.

IT is impossible ever to think of being happy, without this *inward Peace* and *Quiet*. A Man may as well pretend to live without his Heart, as imagine, he can be happy while his Mind is uneasy; for from hence flows all Pleasure and Contentment: And if the Conscience is not calm and quiet within, there can be nothing but Disorder and Confusion, ugly Fears, and frightful Apprehensions. A Man may put on what Countenance he pleases; but, without this *inward Peace*, he knows, he feels, he is not happy; for nothing but a conscious Integrity, can make him easy. When a Man recollects, that he has acted according to the Dictates of his Reason, or to such Rules as God hath appointed him to obey in his revealed Will, then he is perfectly easy and quiet; and when he re-

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cals to Mind, that in his Intercourſes and Dealings with Men, he hath acted fairly and juſtly, he is ſatisfied with himſelf; he is aſſured, that what he gets in this Manner, is gotten as it ſhould be; the Thing is really his own, which no one elſe can have any Claim or Title to. But this cannot be ſaid of what is obtained by Violence or Fraud, by wicked and unjuſt Courſes; this is not the Man's who is its Poſſeſſor, but his who is unjuſtly deprived of it; and it ought to be reſtored to him. And let a Man take ever ſo much Pleaſure, in the Uſe and Poſſeſſion of any Thing, yet this Pleaſure is loſt, when he remembers, that he got this by unjuſt Means, and that of Right it belongs to another. The Law, indeed, may not have Power to take it from him, but a Law within decrees it to another Man; our Conſcience will not ſuffer us to think it our own, if we came not juſtly by it; for no Man is cunning enough to conceal his Falſhood and Injuſtice from himſelf. A *Judge* may be corrupted by Rewards, he may be biaſſed by his Paſſions and Affections, he may be moved by Love or Hate, or by Hopes or Fears. The

moſt honeſt *Jury*, alſo, may be impoſed upon, by Palliations of bad Matters, by concealing material Truths, by Want of thorough Knowledge and Information of the Caſe, or by the Perjuries of the Evidence: But a Man can never impoſe upon his own Heart; he cannot hide his Knavery from himſelf, and conſequently cannot free himſelf from the Trouble and Uneaſineſs that ſuch Reflections will give him. Wine, perhaps, and Company, for a Time may hinder the Stings of Conſcience; but they will return with greater Force, when the Man is cool again, and Recollection hath reſumed its Empire. While Men are buſy in amaſſing an Eſtate, they overlook a great many Things, and the eager Deſire of being great and wealthy, helps them to ſwallow down what afterwards they cannot poſſibly digeſt: The Ambition of honourable Offices, the Reſolution of building up, or reſtoring a decayed Family, the Deſire of advancing their Children in the World, doth ſo engage Mens Minds, and ſo entirely poſſeſs their Thoughts, that they overlook ſuch Things as they would not do, if they would but conſider Things as

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they ought. And when they have once done them, the Difficulty, or the Shame, of going backwards, hinders them from retracting or restoring; their Affairs are so intricate, and interwoven one with another, they know not how to separate them; they have lived so long in so genteel a Manner, that they know not how to fall, or in what Particular to abate. These Considerations make a great many Men keep, with Injustice, what they have unjustly gotten; they feel themselves uneasy in their Possessions, but they are unwilling to give them up. The Morsels they liked so well at first tasting, are now as bitter as Gall in the Stomach; but it is too great a Violence to think on Restitution: There is so much Shame, Dishonour, and Confusion in it, that they rather chuse to live with a perpetual Check and Uneasiness, than quiet themselves by restoring the ill-gotten Portion.

THUS we see, that a small Thing that the righteous Man hath acquired, by just and honest Means, is better, with respect to that *internal Peace* and *Quiet*, which can only render Men happy, than great Riches,

heaped up by indirect and wicked Courſes. The one hath more true Delight and Satisfaction in the Poſſeſſion of his poor Pittance, than the other in his great Plenty and Abundance: His Mind is perfectly at Eaſe, and he can look up to God with Joy and Comfort, and thank and praiſe him for thoſe Bleſſings, which the other dares not do; becauſe he cannot but know, that God is offended, both with the Manner of getting what he hath, and with his keeping of what he hath no Right to. He cannot praiſe God with any Heart, nor pray with any Hope, for a Continuance of what he hath; becauſe it would be calling God into a Party, and looking upon him as a Favourer of what he mortally hates, and will ſeverely puniſh. He looks for little Love and Favour from God: He feels continually, that there is ſomething weighs him down within; ſomething that croſſes his Prayers, and makes him hopeleſs: He dines, as it were, at another Man's Table, and finds he is not welcome: He ſits uneaſy over the niceſt Fare, wiſhing himſelf at home, though with much coarſer Food; but

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but Shame and Fear, Custom and Good-breeding, will not suffer him to move.

I MAKE no Doubt, but many an unjust Possessor finds himself in the same Condition: His Mind reproaches him, and he would give up the ill-gotten Booty, did not the Considerations above-mentioned stand in his Way, and put a Stop to his honest Purposes, or rather Wishes; and so he makes an hard Shift to struggle on, and labours under a perpetual Trouble and Uneasiness of Mind, still hoping for a better Opportunity, that never comes; for it is the Resolution of the Mind, that makes Half of every Opportunity.

SINCE, therefore, neither *God*, nor good Men, nor indeed bad Men, like and approve of Falshood and Injustice; and, since there is neither true Delight in getting, nor in keeping an Estate, by wicked and indirect Means, let us not suffer the Desire of getting, nor keeping a greater Estate than ordinary, prevail against the Conscience of our Duty: Nor, let us prefer the Pleasure, or Convenience, or Honour of being rich, to the Approbation of God and good Men, to the Peace and Quiet of our own Minds

Minds here, and to the Salvation of our own Souls hereafter. SERM. XXIV.

Now, that a good Man with a ſmall Eſtate, is much happier than a wicked Man with a large one, whether honeſtly or diſhoneſtly gotten, will appear from the Uſes that Men commonly propoſe, when getting their Eſtates; which, tho' generally much better than they put them to, when gotten; yet, are unworthy of the ſmalleſt Hazard. And,

1*ſt*, Men commonly propoſe *the living more plentifully* with a great Fortune, than they can with a ſcanty one: But it is very often ſeen, that that penurious, narrow Way of Living, which is one of the moſt likely Ways of growing rich, obtains ſo by Cuſtom and Continuance, that, at laſt, it becomes habitual and eaſy to them; ſo that a Man can hardly change it, if he would; he cannot find in his Heart to live ſo plentifully, and, as they call it, comfortably, when he is able, as he intended to do, when he was not ſo. The Time he ſpent, and the Pains he took, to compaſs his End, have diverted him from it, and given his Mind another Bias. He finds

SERM. XXIV. finds he can live comfortably, without living plentifully; that is, after a prodigious deal of Care and Trouble to amaſs great Riches, in order to live liberally, he finds, by Experience, that he could live as comfortably with the little he had before, as he can now, with all his Wealth.

THIS is the real Diſcovery, that Thouſands make, *who riſe up early, and go to Bed late, and eat the Bread of Carefulneſs*, for many Years, in order to live freely at laſt. They ſee, that, when they have acquired what would ſuffice to anſwer their Deſign and Purpoſe, they want Ability of Mind to do it. *There is one*, ſaith *Solomon*, *to whom God hath given Riches and Plenty, but he wanteth the Power to eat thereof*[a]. This is the Man, who by his ſordid Thrift, his vile, illiberal Way of Living, all the Time of purchaſing his Wealth, hath loſt all free and generous Thoughts; and even the very Power too of uſing it. This is enough to ſhew the Vanity and Weakneſs of Mens taking ſuch a World of Pains to acquire a great Eſtate, with a Proſpect of living freely; who, yet, may loſe their Deſign,

[a] *Eccleſ.* vi. 2.

Deſign, by the Way, though they have the Means in their own Power. And, if this Vanity and Weakneſs be very great, where Men purſue their End by juſt and honeſt Courſes; what muſt it be, when they purſue it by unlawful ones, by Fraud and Violence, by Cruelty and Oppreſſion, and by a thouſand Injuries of ſeveral Sorts? What an Extremity of Folly and Madneſs muſt it be, to venture Soul and Body, for the Sake of an End, that we ſhall never compaſs? And, how much leſs is the Number of thoſe, who take all ſinful and forbidden Ways to purchaſe an Eſtate, in order to live ſplendidly and freely, that bring their Purpoſes to paſs, and live according to that Purpoſe; how much leſs, I ſay, is the Number of theſe, than of thoſe, who take the ſame unlawful Courſes with the ſame Purpoſe and Deſign, that yet are never able to effect it, but are often cut off by untimely Ends, and die in the Heat of their unjuſt Purſuits? And, what is it, after all, to gain the common Ends that Men propoſe in gathering Riches? Let it be granted, that they eat and drink with greater Delicacy SERM. XXIV.

and

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and Plenty; are cloathed richly, and followed with much Attendance; yet, what are all these Things? There is as much Content and Satisfaction in the Enjoyment of a moderate Share of them; nay, all Things justly considered, the moderate State of Life is far more preferable.

THESE Pleasures are of such a Nature, that there is no Delight in the Remembrance of them: For, it signifies nothing how a Man lived a Week ago, if he be well now. It is no Pain to have fared hardly in Time past, nor any Pleasure to have lived sumptuously Years ago. All these Things are, as if they had never been. No Man ever grieved a Minute, for all the Hardships he hath undergone, if they have left no sharp Remembrances behind them. The *present* Pain, and *present* Pleasures are what Men only are concerned for; and, therefore, the poorest Man alive, that is well to-day, is full as happy as the greatest Prince, with respect to the Pleasures of Eating and Drinking for the Time past.

AND, therefore, what Account can any one give, that, for his Satisfaction, will venture

venture on Injuſtice and Villany? Will a Man hazard his Reputation, break the Peace and Quiet of his Mind, offend God, and deſtroy his Soul, that he may have wherewith to live nobly? Is it worth while to be wicked, and conſequently miſerable, to be able to furniſh out a grand Table every Day? Theſe Queſtions may be eaſily anſwered. The Pleaſures of ſuch Things are nothing: And the ſame may be ſaid of all other Expences. The Satisfaction they afford is ſo very inconſiderable, that if Men would but conſider, how *light*, *ſhort*, and *fantaſtical*, all the *Pleaſures* are, which are attainable by Riches, they would not venture the leaſt Diſquiet of Heart for them; much leſs would they incur the Wrath of God, for any of their Sakes. SERM. XXIV.

AND, therefore, when a Man is haſtening to be rich by indirect and wicked Courſes, let him but ſtop a little, and conſider, what the Ends are, that he propoſes to himſelf, by gaining ſuch or ſuch an Eſtate; and ſee, whether they are worth the Care and Pains, that he muſt undergo, before he can attain them: Let him think, whether they will anſwer Expectation,

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tation, when attained; if he ſhall truly find the Satisfaction in them, that he thinks there is. Is it not probable, that he may die, before he reaps the Fruit of his Labours? Or, if he lives, that his Mind ſhall be awakened, and his Heart oppreſſed with the Remembrance of his evil Ways? Theſe are but reaſonable Enquiries, where the Event is of the laſt Moment; and, if they were but made in good Earneſt, Reaſon and Conſcience would furniſh him with ſuch an Anſwer, as would quickly put a Stop to all ſuch unjuſt and wicked Deſigns of raiſing a Fortune. Whoſe Heart, upon Demand, would not inform him, that his Innocence, and the Salvation of his Soul, ſhould be preferred to all the Pleaſures of the World? And what can be more reaſonable, than that a Man ſhould truly underſtand the Bargain he is driving; that he ſhould know what he is to get, and what he is to loſe by it? If he ſays, Happineſs is his Aim: He may be full as happy, in a moderate Eſtate, as the Things of this World can make him; and, therefore, there can be no Reaſon, upon that Account, for all this

this Craving, and running the Hazard of his Soul. SERM. XXIV.

The other general End, Men propoſe in gathering Riches, is the *Building up of Families*, and making their *Children* great and happy.

BUT, as the Time will not permit me now to enter upon it, I ſhall leave it to another Opportunity.

SERMON XXV.

On the PROSPERITY and SUCCESS of Good and Bad MEN.

PART II.

PSALM xxxvii. 16.

A ſmall Thing that the Righteous hath, is better than great Riches of the Ungodly.

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HAVING conſidered one of the Ends, for which Men are ſo deſirous of getting Riches, namely, that they may live more *plentifully and freely, and enjoy their Pleaſures*; I come now,

2*dly*, To diſcourſe of that other Uſe, or End, that Men propoſe, or at leaſt pretend to, in their Purſuit of Wealth, and that is, *the Building up of a Family*, and making their *Children* and *Poſterity* rich and happy.

SOME Care of this Sort is, certainly, rea- SERM. ſonable and juſt; ſome Pains are due to our XXV. Poſterity: It is a Deſire originally implanted in all Mens Hearts, in a greater or leſs Degree, by God himſelf, for the better Preſervation of the World; and St. *Paul* aſſures us, that he that doth not take Care of his own, *is worſe than an Infidel.* But for Men to venture upon ſinful Actions, only for the Sake of their Children, is worſe than to neglect them. It is too much, in all Reaſon, to ſee ſo many Men live ſo penuriouſly, and take ſuch Pains and Care for their Childrens Sakes, though they injure no one but themſelves, and purſue their Ends honeſtly and fairly; but it is too much, that they ſhould be unjuſt and wicked for their Sakes; that they ſhould love them ſo beyond themſelves, as to venture being eternally miſerable for them, that they and their Poſterity may live delicately a few Years, and may not toil and labour as they have done. It would be well, if Parents would conſider, by the Examples they know and ſee continually before their Eyes, how many Children are worthy of all the Care and Pains their

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Friends have beſtowed upon them; how wiſely they manage the Stock that is left them; to what good Uſes they put it; how long it continues with them; what Improvements they generally make; how thankful they are; and what Honours they bring to their Name and Family. Such Conſiderations would make a great many Men bethink themſelves, for what and whom they take ſuch Pains, though they be in an honeſt Way: But they would certainly cure Men of that too ſtrong and vain Deſire, of leaving their Children great and wealthy, at the Expence of their Honeſty and Virtue, their Juſtice, Religion, and Salvation. Surely, Children muſt be much more than Parts of ourſelves, when we durſt be wicked for their Sakes. We ſee Men frequently forego their own Pleaſure and Satisfaction for the Sake of others; which may be done without any Blame, becauſe a Man is certainly at his own Diſpoſal in theſe Caſes, and may deny himſelf what Pleaſure he pleaſes: But to be miſerable without Redemption, for the Sake of any one, is unaccountable Madneſs. And yet this is the Caſe of ſuch as will defraud

and

and cheat, to obtain a great Eſtate to leave their Family. One may lay down even Life for a Friend, and our Bleſſed Saviour did ſo for his Enemies; but it is too much in all Conſcience to be *damned*, though for the Safety of the whole World: And yet Men venture this for the Convenience, Pleaſure, and Advantage of Poſterity. They do it when they oppreſs, and are unjuſt, to get a large Fortune to leave to their Children: But the Honour, or conceited Pleaſure, of being the *Founder of a Family*, is much too little for the fearful Hazard that ſuch Men run. SERM. XXV.

THESE are the only Ends that Men do, or can propoſe to themſelves, in gathering Riches by indirect and ſinful Courſes; but if there be any more, they are certainly as little worthy ſuch a Venture as theſe are: And, therefore, as theſe Conſiderations ſhould check and reſtrain Men from attempting to grow rich by bad Means; ſo they may ſerve to comfort thoſe, who chuſe to continue in a mean Condition, with a good Conſcience, rather than increaſe their Subſtance at the Expence of their Virtue and Integrity: For there is more true Delight and Satis-

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faction in being innocent, and in the Favour of God, let our Condition be what it may, than can poſſibly be in all the Enjoyments, that a great Eſtate can make us Maſters of, while we live baſe and profligate Lives; for *there is no Peace to the Wicked*, and where there is no Peace, there can be no Felicity. They may put on what Face they pleaſe, but there is nothing but Trouble and Diſorder within; by which they can never enjoy any Pleaſure, till they are become ſtupid, and have loſt their Memory; for when they are forced to remember, their own Hearts will certainly condemn them. The Conſcience of one's Guilt is conſtantly attended with the Fear of Puniſhment; and all wicked Men muſt know, that the Almighty is acquainted with all they do, and will puniſh them ſeverely for all their Iniquities. Now, what a poor Exchange do Men make, that give up their Innocenee and Peace of Mind, for the Pleaſure of being richer than ordinary! And how much more deſirable muſt it be, to *feel* one's ſelf happy, than only to be *thought* ſo by other Men; which is generally all the Happineſs that Wealth affords!

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The World is apt to think the Rich are happy, because they wish to be such themselves; and because the Rich appear to be so. But the Case is not such: Men are no more happy, than healthy, by their appearing to be well, or being thought so by others. They must both of them feel themselves to be what they appear, or it will signify nothing; and that a Man can never do, who is a bad Man. It is hard for a Man to be at Ease, under the Apprehension of the Enmity of a powerful Man, or the Displeasure of a very good one. These Things keep the Mind in Awe and great Subjection; and the Opportunities of many Pleasures are lost, while Men are engaged and intent upon any of these Apprehensions; and they are not at full Liberty, till they have made their Peace. And how much less can they be easy in their Minds, who live under the Apprehensions of God's Displeasure; which, they are sure, will, one Day or other, break out against them in most terrible Effects! SERM. XXV.

And as for providing for their Children; good Men, with their small Fortune, have this Comfort, that what they leave

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them, they will have unenvied and undiſputed; they will enjoy it with the Favour and Bleſſing of God, and the Approbation of all good Men.

LET us leave our Children juſt and honeſt Principles, inſtruct them in the neceſſary Duties of Religion, accuſtom them to Labour and Application, make them careful and attentive in their Buſineſs, and induſtrious in their Callings; and much leſs Matters will ſuffice to make them happy Men. But now, the Want of theſe good Qualities muſt be ſupplied with great Riches, which, by daily Experience, do not turn to half ſo good an Account; becauſe it ſignifies nothing, how much is left them, if they are deſtitute of theſe good Qualities; they will quickly ſquander it away; or, if they are frugal enough to keep it, it will be employed in pampering their Luſts and Paſſions.

BUT further: Sometimes we ſee, that the Children die before their Parents, and viſibly mock the unreaſonable Care and Pains they have been at, in heaping up Riches for thoſe, that ſhall never enjoy them.

And ſometimes they quickly follow after, and ſhew the Shortneſs of our Foreſight, and the Vanity of taking ſuch a Compaſs of Proviſion in, when a few Months have put an End to all their Wants, and all their Expence. Serm. XXV.

These are ſome of the Reaſons, on which the Pſalmiſt founds the Propoſition in the Text, *A ſmall Thing that the Righteous hath, is better than great Riches of the Ungodly.* And the Inference that he makes from hence is this, That there is little Reaſon to envy or repine at the Condition of the Wicked, though it may look ſo fair and flouriſhing in the World; becauſe they want that Peace and Quiet of Mind, that is abſolutely neceſſary to make any one happy in this World, and without which, not all the Riches he can amaſs together can do it. Nothing but Innocence and Virtue can afford it; nothing but true Repentance can recover it, when it is loſt; and that is returning back again to Virtue and Religion. Let a Man's Circumſtances be ever ſo great, they can contribute nothing to this Happineſs; for few Men are miſerable by a ſmall Eſtate, and none were ever

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ever happy by a great one only. No one can ever be happy, who is not in God's Favour; and no one can enjoy that, who is not just and righteous; and to be just and righteous, it is neither needful to be rich or poor: For Men may be honest in all Conditions; and howsoever some may judge of these Things, while they live, yet, when they come to die, they will think it better to have lived honestly and virtuously, than to be possessed of all the Riches in the World: And as we must die in our Turns, we ought to settle it as a certain Truth, that all the Pleasures we can possibly propose to enjoy, by a large Fortune, either in our Persons, or in making our Posterity happy, are not to be compared to the Joys of being innocent, and to the Delights of a good Conscience: For let a Man be ever so rich, it is possible, he may not be happy; but a good Man must be so.

AFTER a few Years, there will be an End put to all the Happiness that Wealth can give; and when that Time is come, there will be no Enquiry made, how rich or how poor we have been; but how well or how ill we have lived.

THESE

These will be the Enquiries at that fearful Day; and it will be our Wisdom to provide in Time such Answers, as will stand us in stead. All Enquiries about Riches will then be, by what Methods we gained them, and in what Manner we used them: And if we cannot answer, *honestly and justly*, to the getting them; and *soberly, wisely, and charitably*, to the spending them; we shall wish, with all our Hearts, we had been rather righteous with a small Thing, than ungodly with great Riches.

Let us, therefore, make Provision against such Time, since it will certainly come. We are all, when we set ourselves to reason, of the same Opinion in these Things, that we shall be at the last Day; and therefore, let us practise as we ought, and shall, at that Time, wish we had. And, in order to it, let us be content with the little we have, that is gotten honestly; let us consider, that it is absolutely necessary to be good, but not so to be rich. We may live poor, and die poor, with Safety; but we can neither live happy, nor die securely, if we are not good and virtuous:

And,

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And, therefore, let that be our chief Buſineſs, which will both make and keep us happy, while we live, and comfort us when we come to die. Let a Man be ever ſo rich and proſperous in his Affairs, yet, if he be not good, he muſt and will be unhappy; becauſe he will want that, without which no Man can be happy, namely, the Favour of God, and the Peace of his own Mind. On the other Hand, let a Man be ever ſo poor and deſtitute of worldly Things, yet, if he be a good Man, he cannot be wretched; he feels an inexpreſſible Satisfaction, in the Conſciouſneſs of having done his Duty; and though he may ſuffer ſome Hardſhips from the Straitneſs of his Circumſtances, yet that certain Hope of eternal Happineſs, that he hath in Reverſion, keeps up his Spirits, and makes him eſteem the Troubles of this World, as light Afflictions, that will ſoon end.

LET not, therefore, the Love of the World, and the Things of it, tempt us to deſtroy the Peace and Quiet of our own Minds; which is the greateſt Misfortune, and more to be dreaded, than any Thing that we may ſuffer from the loweſt Poverty.

REMEM-

Remember, that the Hour of Death is at Hand; and that, when we ſhall go down into the Grave, we ſhall carry away nothing with us. Indeed, our good Works will follow after; and, according to our being rich in them, will our Reward be. Serm. XXV.

Grant, therefore, we beſeech thee, Almighty God, that every one of us may know and do, in this our Day, the Things that belong to our Peace, before they be hid from our Eyes, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XXVI.

The Delay of CONVERSION and AMENDMENT, one great Cauſe of the bad Lives of CHRISTIANS.

PART I.

PSALM cxix. 60.

I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

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I BELIEVE there is no Deceit more common, none that tends more to the Encouragement of Wickedneſs and Vice in the World, than the Delaying our Repentance. It is hard to imagine, that Chriſtians, who believe the Immortality of the Soul, and that they ſhall be puniſhed or rewarded in a future State, according as they have lived here, are ſo blind and ſtupid, as never to think on their Salvation. There are but few Men, if any, that have not

not a general Intention to obtain it: Even wicked Men are convinced, that Converſion is neceſſary; and that they are not in ſuch a State of Safety, as they could wiſh they were. SERM. XXVI.

IF it be aſked, Why then do they not repent, that they may be ſo? I anſwer, That ſo unreaſonable a Proceeding ought to be imputed to the Hope they entertain of clearing all Scores, and ſetting all Things right *one Day* by Repentance; and of obtaining Pardon of their Sins, through the Mercy of God, and the Merits of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

THIS is the true Cauſe of the greateſt Part of thoſe Sins, that are committed in the World: It is that deceitful Hope, that makes void all Endeavours, that are uſed to make Men forſake their wicked Courſes: It is on this Account, that they make no Haſte to keep God's Commandments.

THE Delay of Converſion and Amendment ought, therefore, to be counted, as one great Cauſe of the bad Lives of Chriſtians.

I SHALL, therefore, conſider this important Matter, as it may be of great Uſe to us all, in the further Courſe of our Lives.

WE

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WE may obſerve, that there are *two* different Ways of putting off *Converſion*.

1ſt, SOME Men put it off to a very diſtant Time, and to the very End of their Lives.

2dly, OTHERS deſign to go about it ſooner than that, but put it off to an undetermined, uncertain Day.

THE *firſt* ſin, properly, in Hopes of *Pardon*.

THE *others*, in Hopes of *Repentance*.

THE *former* deceive themſelves more groſly: They ſeem to think, that, in order to be ſaved, it is enough to beg for Mercy, and to repent, as they call it, though ever ſo late. The Illuſion of the other is more ſubtle: They conceive it more neceſſary to reform and forſake Sin; but, nevertheleſs, they do not convert and turn themſelves from their evil Ways immediately, but only propoſe to do it ſome other Time.

Now, though theſe *two* Ways of delaying Repentance, have an Affinity with one another, and might be confuted by the ſame Arguments; yet I ſhall conſider them by themſelves.

1ſt, MEN

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Iſt, MEN commonly entertain this Opinion, that if they do but repent at the End of their Lives, their Sins will be no Hindrance to their Salvation. They allot for this Repentance, the *Approaches of Death*, *Old Age*, or *the Time of Sickneſs*; and they ſuppoſe, that then they ſhall fit themſelves for a *Chriſtian Death*, by confeſſing their Sins, and having Recourſe to the *Divine Mercy*.

THERE is, I believe, no Occaſion to prove, that this Opinion is very common; nor will I go about to ſhew, that it feeds Corruption, and nouriſhes Security, by propoſing to Men ſuch a Method of Salvation, as leaves them at Liberty to live ſtill in their Sins; for all this is ſelf-evident. It will be more neceſſary to let Men ſee, how falſe and dangerous an Imagination that is, which makes them believe, that, if they do but repent before Death, they have nothing to fear, but will certainly be ſaved.

Now, in order to do this, we muſt endeavour to ſhew and diſcover the *Ground and Principles* they act upon, and to unfold the *true Thoughts of their Hearts*.

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THE Delay of Repentance ſuppoſes and includes *two* different Motions, or Intentions of the Mind.

THE *one* inclines and carries a Man towards *Salvation*; for if he had no Thoughts or Deſire to be ſaved, he would never think of repenting.

THE *other* inclines him towards *Sin*, which he is willing to gratify; for were it not for that Deſire, he would immediately repent.

FOR Man is neither ſuch an Enemy to himſelf, as to be altogether unconcerned about his Salvation; nor ſo blind as not to ſee, that Repentance is neceſſary in order to it. On the other Hand, he is ſuch a Slave, and ſo addicted to his Luſts, that he cannot reſolve to renounce them at preſent. In this Diſtraction and Perplexity, he finds out an Expedient, by which he hopes to reconcile the Care of his Soul with the Gratifications of his Luſts; which is this, that though he continues in Sin, yet he intends to repent. But here it is manifeſt, that this Man puts a great Cheat upon himſelf; and that ſuch Thoughts only proceed from Self-love, and a ſtrong Inclination

tion to Sin. Nothing elſe but the abſolute Neceſſity of dying, and being called to Account hereafter, obliges him to deſtine the End of his Life to Acts of Repentance: For it cannot be ſaid, that the Love of God, and of Virtue, hath any Share in this Conduct. Is it any Love of God, or Regard to Goodneſs, that makes a Man deſire them in his laſt Extremity, when he can enjoy the World no longer? This ſhews, that a Man thinks of, and applies himſelf to God, for no other Reaſon, but becauſe he expects Salvation at his Hands; which is to deal with him as with an Enemy, to whom we ſurrender ourſelves as late, and upon as good Terms, as we can. Such a Delay includes a poſitive Reſolution to offend God, and to gratify the Paſſions, at leaſt, for the preſent. He that thinks to repent *hereafter*, is not willing to repent now: He allots the preſent Time for the Enjoyment of his Paſſions, and for the Committing thoſe Sins, which are to be Matter of his after Repentance. This is all that is fixed and certain in his Reſolution; for as to what he promiſes for the Time to come, it is moſt uncertain; and,

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if we conſider the Thing right, he promiſes nothing at all: For he does not know but he may die very ſoon, nor what he ſhall do, in caſe he lives ſome Time longer.

IN order to a full and compleat Repentance, *two* Things are requiſite.

1ſt, To have Time and Opportunity to repent in.

2dly, To make good Uſe of that Time and Opportunity.

THOSE who put off their Repentance to the laſt, muſt ſuppoſe, that they ſhall have theſe two Advantages: But theſe Things are very uncertain, and what no Man in the World can be ſure of.

1ſt, No Man can be ſure, or promiſe himſelf, that he ſhall have Time and Opportunity to repent at the End of his Life.

IT is true, in Fact, that more than Half of Mankind die without having Time to prepare for Death. If we reckon all thoſe, who are ſnatched away in an Inſtant by unforeſeen Accidents, or a ſudden Death; all thoſe, who periſh in War; all thoſe, who are ſeized with Diſtempers that take away

their Senſes; all thoſe whom, the Approaches of Death do not move to Repentance, becauſe they do not apprehend themſelves in any Danger of dying; it is certain, that all theſe, put together, make up above the Half of Mankind. Upon this Account, I aſk, even ſuppoſing, that it were Time enough to repent, when a Man ſees Death approaching, whether it would not be Folly and Madneſs for him to venture his Salvation upon the Hope of repenting then?

SOME, perhaps, may be apt to think, that it is the Way to make Men deſpair, to tell them that they ought not to build the Hope of Salvation, upon what they ſhall do in the Extremity of Life. But, what I have ſaid juſt now, proves evidently, that, if Salvation did depend on the Way and Manner of dying, Men muſt live in continual Fears, and a kind of Deſpair; ſince their Salvation muſt depend upon a Thing, that Half of Mankind cannot reckon upon. On the contrary, nothing is more comfortable to Men than to know, that God grants them their Lives to work out their Salvation in; and, that, if they improve,

SERM. XXVI. to that Purpoſe, the Leiſure and Conveniencies they have, their Death cannot but be happy, which Way ſoever it may come.

BUT, though what I now have ſaid were not true; and, though all Men might aſſure themſelves, that they ſhall perceive the Approaches of Death, and have Time to prepare for that laſt Paſſage: Yet,

2dly, WHAT Certainty have they, that they ſhall make uſe of that Opportunity; and that their Converſion will not be moſt difficult, if not impoſſible? Converſion is not wrought without God's Interpoſition, but by thoſe Means which he hath appointed to be uſed for that Purpoſe; and can any Man flatter himſelf with the Hope, that theſe Means ſhall be offered to him to the laſt? Or, that God, in his juſt Anger, will not withdraw them from him? There is neither particular Revelation, nor general Promiſes, to give ſuch Aſſurances to any Man. So far from it, that God tells us many Things in Scripture, which leave no Ground to hope, for thoſe who abuſe his Mercy.

BUT further: What can we imagine that God will do, in Favour of a hardened Sinner,

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at the Time of Death, when he hath made uſe of the Preaching of his Word, of Exhortations, Promiſes, Threatnings, inward Suggeſtions, and Motions of his Holy Spirit? When God, I ſay, hath made uſe of all theſe Means for twenty, thirty, or forty Years, without any Succeſs, I cannot apprehend what Man can expect, that he ſhould do more at the Hour of Death. If it be ſaid, that he can, by a *particular Diſpenſation*, by ſudden Inſpiration, by a Kind of Miracle, convert a Sinner in his laſt Minutes; I will not diſpute what God can do: But I make no Scruple to ſay, that, in the *common Courſe of Grace*, Converſion is not wrought by ſudden and miraculous Inſpirations. The Goſpel ſpeaks of nothing like that; and they, who look for ſuch Miracles, had beſt conſider what they found their Hopes upon. It is certain, beſides, that Repentance is moſt difficult on Man's Part, when he is at the Point of Death. If a Man hath lived in Ignorance and Vice, is he not in great Danger of dying ignorant and hardened? How will he perform the Duties *then*, of which he hath not the leaſt Notion or Underſtanding? Can a Man, SREM. XXVI.

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at that Time, change his evil Inclinations, and ſhake off his vicious Habits, on a Sudden? All they who have applied themſelves to the Work of Converſion, know, by Experience, that the Conqueſt of but one ſingle Vice, requires much Time and Care. Vicious Habits are not to be deſtroyed on a Sudden, but by Degrees: And good ones are acquired only by repeated Acts. It is repugnant to the Nature of Man, that this ſhould be done in an Inſtant: One may as well expect to ſtart in a Moment from Childhood to Old Age. How, then, can one reckon that ſo conſiderable a Change, as that which true Converſion makes, will be effected in the ſhort Time of a Sickneſs? And if this was poſſible, and with great Care might be done, yet can any Man aſſure himſelf, that he ſhall have *then* all that Freedom, and all that Strength of Mind and Body, which are neceſſary to ſet about this general Reformation? Is the Time of Sickneſs, when a Man is ſo much ſunk, and hath the leaſt, either of Leiſure or Strength, ſo very fit for a Buſineſs of this Importance? All that a Man can do then, is to betake himſelf to ſome *confuſed and abrupt*

abrupt Devotions, the common Refuge of thoſe Sinners, who have lived in a State of Inſenſibility: But will that ſerve their Turn? Are ſome haſty Reflections on a Man's paſt Life, ſome Acts of Contrition, ſome Prayers proceeding from Trouble, and extorted only by the Fear of Death, ſufficient to make Amends for all that is paſt? Is this to perform the Covenant of the Goſpel, and to keep the Commandments of God? And will this ſecure to a Sinner, an Eternity of Happineſs? Without doubt, it will not. SERM. XXVI.

But further: By growing into Years, Men loſe the Senſe and Remembrance of their Sins. Age and Cuſtom produce this Effect; excepting ſome extraordinary Sins, which can never be forgotten, Men do not remember their Faults: And how ſhould they remember them, ſince, for the moſt Part, they do not perceive when they commit them? We ſee Men, who will ſwear and blaſpheme, and fly out into Paſſion, almoſt every Minute, and yet do not reflect upon it; nay, are ready to ſwear, they are free from them. This Error proceeds ſo far, that ſome very great Sinners, who live

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in criminal Practices, fancy themſelves pious, and make no Doubt, but that they are in the Favour of God, and a State of Salvation. Now, ſince the Cuſtom of ſinning does blind Men to ſuch a Degree, is it likely, that, after they have ſpent their Lives in this Security and Confidence, they will effectually repent at their Death? Can a Man repent, who does not know the Reaſons why he ſhould repent; who does not feel, or has forgotten his Sins; and who thinks, beſides, that he is in a very ſafe State, and hath no Need of ſuch Repentance? But further:

If Repentance ſuppoſes a *Knowledge* of Sin, it ſuppoſes, beſides, a *Hatred* of it: But he who hath loved Sin to the laſt, is, at that Time, leſs able to *hate*, than he is to *know*, his Sins. It is impoſſible for any one to comprehend, how a Man, who hath exceſſively loved the World all his Life long, who hath made it his only Delight and Study to gratify his ſinful Inclinations, who hath been always cold and careleſs about Religion, ſhould, when Death appears, and ſtares him in the Face, ſuddenly change his Inclinations, hate what he

he loved, and love what, till then, he al- SERM.
ways looked on with Indifference or Con- XXVI.
tempt. So ſudden a Turn, ſo quick a Paſ-
ſage, from the Love to the Hatred of Sin, is very rare, and muſt be effected by Miracle, if at all. The Sorrow for Sin, and the Hatred of it, are always faint and weak in the Beginning of Repentance, even in thoſe who have Time before them and repent ſincerely. Converſion proceeds by Degrees; a Man muſt have diſcontinued the Habit and Cuſtom of ſinning, and be already ſettled in the Practice of Virtue, before he can have an Hatred, and a ſtrong Averſion to Sin. And what Kind of Repentance then can that be, what Hopes can it have of being accepted, which begins in the Extremity of Life? But further:

We muſt conſider, that there is a Time, a Day allotted, to work out our Salvation: This Time is called the *Day of Salvation*, the *Time of our Viſitation*; an *acceptable Time*, wherein God freely offers his Grace, preſents his Mercy to us, and calls us to Repentance. If we let this Day ſlip, *the Night cometh when no Man can work*;

SERM. XXVI. the Things belonging to our Peace, being hid from our Eyes: And, as the Prophet ſpeaks [a], *We ſhall grope for the Wall as the Blind, and ſtumble at Noon-day as in the Night, and be in deſolate Places as dead Men.* After that Day is ſpent, and that Light ſet, Darkneſs and Deſolation will ſucceed; when God, being weary of bearing with Men, will utterly forſake them, and give them up to a reprobate Mind, to *commit all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*; when he withdraws his gracious Aſſiſtance, and gives them up to their own Hearts Luſts; when, like *Pharaoh*, they ſurvive only as Objects of his Juſtice, or Occaſions to glorify his Power; when, like *Eſau*, they cannot find a Place for Repentance, though they ſeek it with Tears. If then, by neglecting our Seaſon and preſent Opportunities, we fall into this State, then is our State deplorable; we are dead Men, irreverſibly doomed, and only for a few Minutes reprieved from the Stroke of final Vengeance; we are *Veſſels of Wrath, fitted for Deſtruction*: Wherefore, according to the Advice of *Iſaiah*, *Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found*;

[a] *Iſaiah* lix. 10.

found; and call upon him, while he is near; leſt the Threatning of divine Vengeance come to be executed, and ye be drove away from the Preſence of the Lord. SERM. XXVI.

IF it be objected to this, What Occaſion is there for ſuch Haſte? What Obligation to ſuch a ſpeedy Repentance? Since God is always ready to reſtore the greateſt Sinners to his Favour, when they have Recourſe to his Mercy; and that there are expreſs Promiſes and Examples in the *Old* and *New Teſtament*, to aſſure us of it. We are told, that *when a wicked Man turneth from his Wickedneſs, and doth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his Soul alive:* That, *if we waſh ourſelves, make us clean, put away the Evil of our Doings, and ceaſe to do Evil; then, though our Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be white as Snow; though they be like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool:* That, *if we rend our Hearts, and turn unto the Lord, he is gracious and merciful, and will repent of the Evil:* That *God is good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in Mercy to all that call upon him:* That, whenever a prodigal Son, with Humility and Repentance, *will ariſe and go to his Father*, he will

SERM. XXVI. will receive him into Favour, and forgive him.

In a Word, That the greateſt Sinner that ever was, or can be imagined, if he be diſpoſed to repent, is capable of Mercy. All this is very true, but nothing to the preſent Purpoſe; nor does at all encourage us to continue in Sin, nor prevent the Danger of delaying our Repentance; as I will ſhew more at large the next Opportunity.

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SERMON XXVII.

The Delay of CONVERSION and AMENDMENT, one great Cauſe of the bad Lives of CHRISTIANS.

PART II.

PSALM cxix. 60.

I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

IN Excuſe for delaying their Repentance, Men are very apt to tell us, that at what Time ſoever the wicked Man turneth from the Evil of his Ways, God, through the Infiniteneſs of his Goodneſs and Mercy, will forgive him. And, indeed, it muſt be granted, that God never does reject a repenting Sinner. But we muſt take particular Care, that we are not deceived in judging what true Repentance is.

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is. And if we do ſo, we ſhall ſee no Reaſon to believe, that any dying Sorrows, or the Vows and Reſolutions of departing Sinners, will be accepted by God for true Repentance. And becauſe Miſtakes herein are very fatal, I will explain this Matter as clearly as I can.

1. IN expounding the Promiſes of the Goſpel, we muſt take care to reconcile the Goſpel to itſelf; and not make one Part of it contradict and overthrow another. Now, as the Goſpel promiſeth Pardon of Sin to true Repentance, ſo it makes Holineſs of Life as neceſſary a Condition of Salvation, as true Repentance. *Without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God. God will render to every Man according to his Works; to them, who, by patient Continuance in well-doing, ſeek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life: But to them, that are contentious, and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteouſneſs, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil; but Glory, Honour, and Peace to every Man, that worketh Good:* So our Saviour ſays, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* But, infinite

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are the Texts, that might be brought to ſhew the Neceſſity of living well, in order to be ſaved. The Promiſes of Forgiveneſs to Repentance are not more, nor more expreſs, than theſe, and many other Texts are, which plainly declare, that we ſhall be rewarded according to our Works: And we have as much Reaſon to believe the one, as the other; and if we believe the Goſpel, we muſt believe them both: And then Repentance and a good Life are both neceſſary to Salvation: And if ſo, then the dying Sorrows of Sinners, and whatſoever Reſolutions they can make, who are paſt mending their evil Lives, can never paſs for a true ſaving Repentance. If Sorrow for Sin, or a Promiſe to amend, when there is no Time to do it in, can carry Men to Heaven, then it is certain, that a good and holy Life is not neceſſary; then Men may ſee God without Holineſs; and then the Promiſes of Pardon to Repentance, if this dying Sorrow be true Repentance, overthrow the Neceſſity of a holy Life; as the Neceſſity of a holy Life contradicts the Promiſes of Pardon to ſuch Penitents; and then, either one, or both of them muſt be falſe.

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To clear this Matter, therefore, and to ſtate it as plainly as I can, we muſt diſtinguiſh the ſeveral Sorts of Repentance mentioned in Scripture; of which there are *three*.

1*ſt*, THE Repentance that is required of thoſe that are admitted to *Baptiſm*, and ſo are in Covenant with God, according to the Terms and Conditions of the Chriſtian Religion.

2*dly*, THE Repentance of thoſe that relapſe and fall into groſs, and wilful Sins, after they are baptized, and have profeſſed the Faith of Chriſt, and promiſed to obey him.

3*dly*, THE Repentance of good Chriſtians for ſuch Faults, as are unavoidable, and which are conſiſtent with a State of Grace and Favour with God.

THE *firſt* of theſe, to wit, *baptiſmal Repentance*, which is neceſſary in adult and grown Perſons, in order to their receiving chriſtian Baptiſm, is that Repentance, which is moſt frequently mentioned in Scripture, and is called *Repentance from dead Works*; and to which the Promiſe of Pardon and Forgiveneſs is annexed. This our Saviour preached, and this he commanded his Apoſtles, *That Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations.*

Now

Now this Repentance, which was required both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who embraced the Faith of Chriſt, was a renouncing all their Sins, their falſe Superſtitions, and idolatrous Worſhip: And this qualified them for Baptiſm; in which they obtained the Remiſſion of all their paſt Sins, in the Name of Chriſt. And for this Reaſon, Remiſſion of Sins is promiſed to Repentance, becauſe all ſuch Penitents are received to Baptiſm, which is called the *Laver of Regeneration*, becauſe it waſhes away all their Sins, and puts them into a State of Favour with God; as St. *Peter* tells the *Jews*: *Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins*; and to the ſame Purpoſe, *Ananias* ſays to St. *Paul*, *Ariſe and be baptized, and waſh away thy Sins, calling on the Name of the Lord.* And there is no Text in the New Teſtament, in which the Remiſſion of Sins is abſolutely promiſed to Repentance, but what muſt be underſtood of this firſt, and baptiſmal Repentance: And then Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins are inſeparably joined, becauſe ſuch Penitents waſh away their Sins in Baptiſm, and come pure and

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undefiled out of that ſacred Fountain. In ſhort, Chriſt and his Apoſtles were to aſſure all Men, whether *Jews* or *Heathens*, that the Sins committed in their former States, and during the Time of their former Ignorance, ſhould not exclude them from the Covenant of Grace, provided they ſincerely mourned for them, and forſook them for the Time to come. When any of theſe came to be baptized, nothing elſe was required of them, but that they ſhould repent for what was paſt, and make a ſolemn Promiſe of being holy for the Time to come. Now it is certain, that, ſhould any Perſon, who comes to Baptiſm, rightly qualified and diſpoſed, with a ſincere Repentance and ſtedfaſt Faith in Chriſt, die ſoon after he is baptized, before he has Time and Opportunity to exerciſe any of the Duties of a chriſtian Life, ſuch an one, without doubt, would be ſaved. The Remiſſion of his Sins in Baptiſm upon his Repentance, will ſave him, though he hath not Time to bring forth the Fruits of Repentance in a Courſe of good Actions and an holy Life. From what hath been ſaid, it appears plainly, that the firſt Sort of Repentance

belongs not to Chriſtians who have been baptized in their Infancy, and have been nouriſhed and brought up in the Kowledge and Profeſſion of Chriſt's true Religion, and might have lived accordingly. God requires ſomething more of ſuch, than barely to repent and be ſorry for their Sins, at the End of their Lives. He calls them to Holineſs upon Pain of Damnation; by which we ſee, how much Chriſtianity is miſtaken and decayed among Chriſtians. That Repentance, which conſiſts in the Confeſſion of Sins, and in a Reſolution to forſake them, was the firſt Thing the *Jews* and *Heathens* were required to do: It was by Way of Preparation to the Practice of their Duty; and, accordingly, St. *Paul* places the Doctrine of Repentance among the fundamental Points and firſt Duties, which they, who came to be baptized, were to be inſtructed in. But, now, Chriſtians look upon Repentance as the Duty, with which they are to end their Lives; that is, they deſign to *end* and finiſh their Courſe, where the *Jews* and *Heathens began*; and hope to enter Heaven at the ſame Gate, which admitted the others into the Church. But, what a SERM. XXVII.

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great and fatal Miſtake this is, will appear, if we conſider

THE *ſecond* Kind of Repentance, which is Repentance after Baptiſm; when Men have relapſed into the Commiſſion of new Sins, after they have waſhed away all their old ones, in Baptiſm; and this is the only Notion of Repentance concerned in the preſent Caſe. For ſuch Sinners, when they come to die, are to repent of a whole Life ſpent in Wickedneſs, after Baptiſm, and their Belief and Profeſſion of Chriſtianity; which makes a great Difference in the Caſe. For, though Faith and Repentance, (as that Repentance ſignifies a Sorrow for paſt Sins, with Promiſes and Reſolutions of a new Life) be the only Conditions required, to obtain Remiſſion of paſt Sins at Baptiſm, and is indeed all that can be required, becauſe ſuch are not in a Condition to do more; yet, when we are baptized, we then covenant with God, for an actual Obedience and Holineſs of Life, to *deny all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts*, and to *live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* And, therefore, mere Repentance and Sorrow for Sin, with the moſt ſolemn Reſolu-

tions and Vows of a new Life, which is all the Repentance dying Men can have, cannot, according to the Terms of the Goſpel, be accepted inſtead of Obedience and Holineſs of our Lives. Indeed, had the Goſpel ſaid, You ſhall either abſtain from all Sin, and do what Good you can while you live, or repent of all your Sins when you come to die; *this* had been a ſufficient Encouragement for a Death-Bed Repentance. But, when Holineſs of Life is made the neceſſary Condition of ſeeing God; and when *the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, againſt all Unrighteouſneſs and Ungodlineſs of Men*; when we are ſo expreſly forewarned, that *the Unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; when our Bleſſed Saviour tells us, that only the Doers of the Word are bleſſed; who, after ſuch Declarations as theſe, can perſuade himſelf, that Sorrow for Sin, and ſome good Reſolutions and fair Promiſes upon a Death-Bed, ſhall carry him to Heaven, who hath been all his Life long diſobeying the Commands of God? SERM. XXVII.

IT will be ſaid, perhaps, that ſometimes, Men who have lived wickedly, die, to all

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Appearance, in very good Diſpoſitions, which they call dying in a good Mind: But to this I reply, That we ſee a great many more of thoſe Perſons, who die in a State of Inſenſibility; and that, by Conſequence, a Sinner, who puts off his Repentance, hath more Reaſon to *fear*, than to *hope*. For, who hath told him, that the Fate of theſe laſt may not be his? And what ſurer Preſage can there be of ſo tragical a Death, than the preſent Hardneſs of his Heart? Beſides, it is not known, whether it frequently happens, as the Objection ſeems to ſuppoſe, that Perſons, who have lived very ill, are ſo well diſpoſed, when they come to die. If Repentance can be ſaving and effectual, when it begins only upon a Death-Bed, every body muſt own, that it ought to be very deep and lively, attended with Demonſtrations of the deepeſt Sorrow, and with all the Proofs, that a dying Man can give, of the Sincerity of his Converſion. But we do not ſee many Inſtances of this Nature: Men generally die as they live, nor is it reaſonably to be expected, they ſhould do otherwiſe. There are very few great Sinners, who expreſs a lively Compunction at their Death,

Death, or a ſincere Deteſtation of their Sins; who have a due Senſe of their Wickedneſs, and endeavour, as much as they can, to make Preparation for it; who practiſe Reſtitution of what they have defrauded others, and endeavour, as much as they can, to do them Juſtice. It is but very ſeldom we ſee ſuch Penitents. Beſides, the Expreſſions of Devotion and Repentance, which are uſed by dying Men, are not always ſincere: Or, if ſincere for the preſent, yet not ſtrong enough for the thorough Change and Converſion of the Heart; and therefore not to be relied upon, either by themſelves, or others. It is much to be feared, that their Repentance, as they call it, is nothing elſe, but a certain Emotion or deep Concern, which the Neceſſity of Dying, and the Approaches of God's Judgment, muſt naturally raiſe in the Mind of any Man, that hath his Wits about him, and hath any Senſe at all, of God and Religion. Nothing is more deceitful, than the judging of a Man by what he either ſays or does, when he is under the Effects of Fear or Trouble. It is commonly ſaid of thoſe, who give ſome Signs of Piety at their

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their Death, that they have made a very chriſtian-like End. But there is, very often, a great Miſtake in that Judgment; and to be convinced of it, we need but obſerve what happens to ſome, who have eſcaped Death, or ſome imminent Danger. While the Peril laſts, who could be more humble and holy than they? They ſhewed ſuch Devotion, and uttered ſuch Diſcourſes, that all who heard them, were the better for them. Their Tears, their Prayers, and their whole Behaviour had the Appearance of ſo much chriſtian Zeal in it, that the Beholders were ſtruck with Admiration. But are there many of theſe, who, when the Danger is over, continue in the ſame good Diſpoſitions, who remember their Vows and Promiſes, or alter any Thing in their former Courſe of Life? Almoſt all of them return to their old Habits, as ſoon as the Calamity is paſt. Theſe are generally the Fruits of that Repentance, which is excited by the Fear of Death, in thoſe who recover. And what Effects, then, can it have in reſpect of thoſe that die? We ought not certainly to condemn any one; but, I think, we ſhould not pronounce a definitive

definitive and abſolving Sentence in Favour of thoſe, who have led very wicked Lives. For though Mens Judgments make no Alteration in the State of the Dead, yet it may have a very ill Effect upon the Living, who may be apt to conclude from thence, that a Man may die very well, and in a State of Grace and Favour with God, who hath all his Life-time lived very wickedly. SERM. XXVII.

BUT it may be objected, Is there no Place, then, for Repentance under the Goſpel? No Remiſſion of Sins after Baptiſm? God forbid! For who then could be ſaved? Our Saviour hath taught us to pray every Day, *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*; and hath taught us *to forgive our Brother, though he offends againſt us ſeventy Times ſeven*[a]; and this, in Imitation of God's Goodneſs in forgiving us: And if we forgive ſo often, after God's Example, ſurely he will forgive much more.

THERE is no Doctrine more certain, or more comfortable, than this, that Remiſſion of the greateſt Sins, though committed after Baptiſm, and Promiſes of Obedience,

[a] *Matt.* xviii. 22.

SERM. XXVII. Obedience, may be obtained upon true Repentance. The Truth of which I will firſt prove; and then ſhew, what that Repentance is, that is required of thoſe, who fall into great Sins, after they have been baptized.

THERE will be no Occaſion to produce any Thing to this Purpoſe, out of the Old Teſtament. There are Proofs enough in the New, which more immediately concern us. I will only mention ſuch as are proper to the Purpoſe, that relate to Chriſtians purged from the Guilt of former Sins, by Baptiſm, and profeſſing Holineſs.

ST. *John* thus writes, *My little Children, theſe Things I write unto you, that ye ſin not; and if any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous: And he is the Propitiation for our Sins*[a]. Here it is manifeſt, that the Apoſtle ſpeaks to baptized Chriſtians, when he calls them *My little Children*, and that he ſuppoſes ſuch may fall into great and heinous Sins, from the Manner of his Expreſſion, *If any Man ſin*; for, he would not have ſpoke in this general Way, if he

[a] 1 *John* ii. 1, 2.

he had meant Sins of unavoidable Infirmity, and ſuch as the beſt of Men, and moſt ſincere Chriſtians are guilty of: And of which St. *James* is to be underſtood, when he ſays, *In many Things we offend all*[a]. So that the Meaning of St. *John* is plainly this: I exhort you, little Children, who are already purged by Repentance, and the Water of Baptiſm, to take all poſſible care, that you ſin not, that you relapſe not into any of thoſe groſs and mortal Sins you were guilty of before you were baptized; but, if any of you ſhould fall into and commit any of thoſe Sins, I would not have you preſently deſpair of Mercy; for, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous.* SERM. XXVII.

THE ſame is alſo clearly proved by thoſe Commands, which are given to lapſed Chriſtians, to repent; which were uſeleſs, if it was not poſſible for ſuch to repent. Thus we read, *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy firſt Works*[b]. More might be added; but this Inſtance is enough to ſhew, that Pardon may be obtained by Chriſtians for the greateſt Crimes, if

[a] *James* iii. 2. [b] *Rev.* ii. 5.

SERM. XXVII. if they truly and ſufficiently repent: And this leads me to the next Particular, which was to ſhew, What that Repentance is, that is required of Chriſtians, that fall into great and heinous Sins after Baptiſm. But I will reſerve this to the next Opportunity.

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SERMON XXVIII.

The Delay of CONVERSION and AMENDMENT, one great Cauſe of the bad Lives of CHRISTIANS.

PART III.

PSALM cxix. 60.

I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

IN diſcourſing the laſt Time upon theſe Words, I propoſed to ſhew, What that Repentance is, that is required of Chriſtians, who fall into great and heinous Sins after Baptiſm. SERM. XXVIII.

Now, it is certain, that Repentance after Baptiſm, requires not only a Sorrow for Sin, and ſome good Purpoſes and Reſolutions of a new Life for the future; but the actual Forſaking of Sin, and Amend-

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ment of our Lives. In Baptiſm, God *juſtifies the Ungodly*[a]; that is, how wicked ſoever Men have been, yet, whenever they repent of their Sins, renounce their former wicked Practices, believe in Chriſt, and enter into Covenant with him by Baptiſm, all their former Sins are immediately forgiven, and waſhed away, without expecting the actual Reformation of their Lives. This was plainly the Caſe of the *Jewiſh* and *Heathen* Converts; who, upon confeſſing their Faith in Chriſt, and renouncing their evil Lives, whatever they had been, were immediately received to Baptiſm; as St. *Peter* tells the *Jews: Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins, and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt*[b]. This is the Goſpel Grace, which is the Purchaſe of Chriſt's Blood, that the greateſt Sinners, upon their Repentance and Faith in Chriſt, are received to Mercy, and waſh away all their Sins in Baptiſm. But, when they are baptized, and enter into Covenant with God, they ſhall then be judged according to the Terms and Condi-

[a] *Rom.* iv. 5. [b] *Acts* ii. 38.

Conditions of that Covenant, which requires the Practice of univerſal Righteouſneſs. Such Perſons, as St. *Paul* reaſons, muſt not expect, that, if they ſtill continue in Sin, Grace will abound. The very Covenant of Grace, which we entered into at Baptiſm, deſtroys all ſuch wicked Hopes; for *how ſhall we, who are dead to Sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his Death? Therefore, we are buried with him by Baptiſm into Death; that like as Chriſt was raiſed from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, ſo we, alſo, ſhould walk in Newneſs of Life.* SERM. XXVIII.

THIS is the Difference St. *Paul* makes, between the Grace of the Goſpel, in receiving the greateſt Sinners to Baptiſm, and juſtifying them by the Blood of Chriſt; and what the ſame Goſpel requires of baptized Chriſtians, to continue in that juſtified State.

IN the firſt Caſe, nothing is required but *Faith* and *Repentance*; upon which Account, we are ſo often ſaid to be *juſtified by Faith, not by the Deeds of the Law*; and to be *ſaved by Grace through Faith; not of Works, leſt any Man ſhould boaſt.*

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BUT *now*, when we are juſtified by a general Repentance and Faith in Chriſt at Baptiſm, we alſo promiſe and vow a Conformity to the Death of Chriſt, by dying unto Sin, and walking *in Newneſs of Life*; that is, we vow an univerſal Obedience to all the Laws of Righteouſneſs, which the Goſpel requires of us. Now, the neceſſary Conſequence of this is, that mere Sorrow for Sin, and the mere Vows and Reſolutions of Obedience, without actual Holineſs, will not ſave a baptized Chriſtian, according to the Terms and Conditions of the Goſpel: And what thoſe Terms and Conditions are, our Saviour himſelf has told us, in that Commiſſion which he gave his Apoſtles: *Go, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to obſerve all Things, whatſoever I have commanded you.*

IF this be ſo, then mere Sorrow for Sin, and Vows of Obedience, though they will be accepted in Baptiſm, will not ſuffice in lieu of our Duty afterwards: No, we muſt put our Vows in Execution, or we ſhall fall from our baptiſmal Juſtification. And there-

therefore, when we relapſe into any great and heinous Sin after Baptiſm, no Repentance will be accepted, but that which actually reforms our Lives. The Grace of Baptiſm waſhes away all the Sins of our paſt Lives, how great and numerous ſoever they may have been, only upon our ſincerely profeſſing the Faith of Chriſt, and repenting of thoſe Sins, and vowing to obey the Laws of the Goſpel for the future; but whoſoever, after Baptiſm, lives a wicked and ungodly Life, and hopes to be ſaved at laſt, only by Faith in Chriſt, and Sorrow for his Sins, joined with Vows of Amendment, when he is juſt dying, will be greatly miſtaken: For, this is only the Grace of Baptiſm, which can never be repeated; not the Rule and Meaſure, whereby God will judge baptized Chriſtians, who have had Time and Opportunity to exerciſe thoſe chriſtian Graces, which they vowed at their Baptiſm. A Man, who retains the Faith of Chriſt, though he lives wickedly, does not forfeit his Baptiſm, but ſhall be forgiven whenever he repents and forſakes his Sins, and lives a good Life; but, if he delays this ſo long, that he hath no

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Time to mend his Life, and can do nothing but be ſorry for his Sins, I cannot ſay, nor do I really believe, that this will be accepted at the Hour of Death: Becauſe the Goſpel requires a holy Life, and not barely a Death-Bed Sorrow for Sin. Sorrow for Sin, and Vows of a new Life, will be accepted at Baptiſm, as the Beginnings of a new Life, and all that we can do at that Time; but that is no Reaſon, why they ſhould be accepted at our Death, when they are only the ſorrowful Concluſions of a wicked Life. God will receive us to Favour and Mercy at Baptiſm, upon our ſolemn Vows of living to him; but he hath no where promiſed to accept of our dying Vows inſtead of Holineſs and Obedience, as a Recompence for a whole Life ſpent in Wickedneſs and Folly. It is very ſeldom that ſuch dying Sorrows, and extorted Vows are ſincere; but were they ever ſo ſincere, yet there is no Promiſe any where in Scripture to a dying Repentance. The Goſpel requires actual Holineſs of Life; and whenever God cuts off ſuch Men in their Sins, without allowing them any Time to reform their Lives, it is very ſuſpicious,

ſuſpicious, that he rejects their Sorrows and their Vows. I will not prejudge the final State of ſuch Men; but if God accepts of ſuch a Death-Bed Repentance, which cannot produce the actual Fruits of Righteouſneſs, it is more than he hath promiſed, and more than he hath given any Man Authority to preach. And we ſhould conſider what infinite Hazards we run by ſuch Delays of Repentance; that we cannot be ſaved by the expreſs Terms of the Goſpel, but if we be ſaved, it muſt be by an extraordinary Favour and Mercy, which he hath promiſed to none, and on which no Man living can depend, let God be ever ſo good and merciful. This, perhaps, may ſeem to be ſevere, but in Truth it is not ſo: Everlaſting Life and Glory is ſo great a Reward, that no Man can juſtly expect it, only for a few dying Sighs and Groans. This is, indeed, very proper to terrify dying Sinners, and it is right they ſhould be terrified. But there is leſs Danger in that, than in nurſing Men up in the deluding Hopes of a Death-Bed Repentance, which overthrows the Goſpel, and makes all its Arguments for a good Life inſigni-

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ficant and ineffectual; and, I am afraid, eternally deſtroys as many as truſt in it.

IF any ſhould aſk here, why Faith and Repentance, without the actual Obedience of our Lives, will not be as well accepted by God, on our Death-Bed, as it is at our Baptiſm? I will aſk another plain Queſtion, Why an Huſbandman, who hires Labourers into his Vineyard in the Morning, and takes them into his Pay, only upon their Promiſe to be faithful and diligent in his Work, ſhould not reward them at Night, though they have done nothing, but loitered away their Time; becauſe they then alſo profeſs, that they are very ſorry they did not work, and make a great many Promiſes, that if they were to begin the Day again, they would be faithful and honeſt Servants? The Promiſe of Faithfulneſs and Diligence, was the Reaſon that they were taken into his Service; but their Sorrow for not working, and their Reſolutions of working, when the Time of working is paſt, is no Reaſon why they ſhould be rewarded, or eſcape the Puniſhment of Loiterers. This is the very Caſe here: We are ſaved by the Mercy of God,

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and the Merits of Chriſt, which we partake of, by our Union to him: This Union is made in Baptiſm, which incorporates us into the Body of Chriſt; and from the very firſt Moment of our Union, we are in a State of Grace and Salvation: Our Sins are waſhed away in the Blood of Chriſt, and the Spirit of Chriſt dwelleth in us, to renew and ſanctify us. Now, all that is required by God, or that ſeems, in the Nature of the Thing, neceſſary to this Union, is a general Repentance of all our paſt Sins, renouncing our former wicked Life, profeſſing our Faith in Chriſt, as the Son of God, and Saviour of the World, and vowing Obedience to his Laws; for this qualifies us to be his Diſciples, and to be received into the Communion of his Body and Church: And therefore, this Faith and Repentance juſtifies in Baptiſm, becauſe they, who thus repent of their Sins, and believe in Chriſt, are received to Baptiſm, and in Baptiſm have all their Sins forgiven. But now, though Faith and Repentance, and the Vows of Obedience, are ſufficient to make us the Diſciples of Chriſt, and to put us into a State of Salva- SERM. XXVIII.

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tion for the preſent; yet, they are not ſufficient to continue us in that State, without actual Holineſs: For, to be a Diſciple of Chriſt, does not ſignify only to believe in him, and to vow Obedience to him, but to obey him in all his Laws. It is reaſonable enough, that, upon our Vows of Obedience, we ſhould be taken into his Service; but it is not reaſonable, that we ſhould be rewarded without performing our Vows. For, it is as ridiculous a Thing, to think that our repeated Sorrows for not obeying, and our repeated and fruitleſs Reſolutions of obeying our Maſter's Will, ſhall paſs for actual Obedience, as that that Son ſhould be thought to do his Father's Will, who ſaid, *I go, Sir, but went not:* Eſpecially, when, after our Vow of Baptiſm, we live a very wicked Life, and never think of repenting till we come to die. If we conſider what is neceſſary to make us Diſciples of Chriſt, and what is required of us, when we are Diſciples; we ſhall ſee a plain Reaſon, why Faith and Repentance, as that ſignifies only Sorrow for Sin, and Vows of Obedience, will juſtify us in Baptiſm, but will not be accepted upon a Death-

Death-Bed, after a Life ſpent in Wickedneſs. For, when a baptized Chriſtian comes to die, he is not then to be made a Diſciple of Chriſt, and to be baptized again; but, he is then to give an Account of his Life, ſince he hath been Chriſt's Diſciple; how he hath performed the Promiſes he made at his Baptiſm; how he hath lived, and how he hath obeyed: And, if the Sum of his Life hath been nothing but Sin and Sorrow, and fruitleſs Vows, he ſhall in no wiſe ſee the Lord; but, ſhall be condemned the more, for having made ſo many Vows, and performed none. SERM. XXVIII.

BUT ſuppoſe we allow, according to the common Opinion, that a true Penitent, whenever he ſincerely repents, though it be upon his Death-Bed, after a long Life of Wickedneſs, ſhall be pardoned, and rewarded by God; yet, upon this Principle, it is impoſſible that a wicked Man, when he comes to die, ſhould have any ſolid Comfort, without a vain and enthuſiaſtick Preſumption.

BECAUSE it is impoſſible, either for himſelf or others to judge, whether his Repentance be true, and ſincere, and ſuch

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an one, as, if he were to live long, would reform his Life, and bring forth the Fruits of Righteouſneſs. And, it is agreed on all Hands, that no other Repentance but this, can be accepted by God. Now, it is abſolutely impoſſible, for any Man to know this without a Revelation, who begins his Repentance upon a Death-Bed. He may feel, indeed, the bitter Pangs and Agonies of Grief, and be heartily ſorry, that he hath ſinned; but will any Man ſay, that whoever is ſorry for his Sins, when he comes to die, ſhall be ſaved? Without doubt, he cannot; for if this were ſo, no Sinner could be puniſhed in the other World, who does not die an *Atheiſt*, or ſuddenly, without any Warning. For it is impoſſible for a Sinner, who is in his Senſes, and believes that wicked Men ſhall be eternally miſerable in the next State, not to feel an amazing Remorſe and Sorrow of Mind, when he finds himſelf juſt falling into it; but, this Sorrow is by no Means ſaving Repentance. And, therefore, though Sinners may feel themſelves *very ſorrowful*, this does not prove them to be *true Penitents*. And yet, this is the only Evidence

Evidence they can have of their Repentance, and the only Thing they can rely on, that they are ſure, their Sorrow is ſincere: But Sinners, who are very ſorry for their Sins, may, for all that, be in a very miſerable Situation. SERM. XXVIII.

SINCE, then, Sorrow for Sin is the only Evidence ſuch Men can have, of the Sincerity of their Repentance: Let us impartially conſider, whether the mere dying Sorrow of Sinners be any Evidence at all of this; or what Kind of Evidence it is.

TRUE Repentance does, at leaſt, include a real Change of Mind, a Turning from our Sins to God, a deep Senſe of the Evil of Sin, and an Abhorrence of ourſelves for it, a great Reverence for God and his holy Laws, as well as a Dread of his Judgments; and a deliberate and ſerious Reſolution of changing our Courſe of Life, and, for the Time to come, of living to God, and the Purpoſes of his Glory, and to exerciſe ourſelves in all the Duties and Offices of a chriſtian Life. Now, ſuppoſe a Man, who hath lived wickedly all his Life, ſhould be thus changed in a Moment, and prove ſuch a true Penitent,

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tent, as is deſcribed; and that God, who knows the Hearts of Men, ſees that his Promiſes are ſincere, and that, if he were to live any longer, he would be a good Man; and, therefore, will pardon and reward him, not according to what he hath done, but according to what he foreſees he would have done, had he lived any longer: I ſay, ſuppoſe ſuch Men may be true Penitents, and pardoned by God, who knows that they are ſo; yet, they can never have the Comfort of it before they die, becauſe it is impoſſible for them to know it.

WHEN Men feel themſelves dying, they are very ſorrowful for their Sins, or, at leaſt, they imagine they are; but, what Probability is there, that they, who were Yeſterday ſo in Love with their Sins, ſhould To-day, becauſe they are arreſted with Sickneſs, become ſuch ſincere Penitents, and abhor their favourite Pleaſures in a Moment? Yet, this is the Caſe of all Sinners, when they come to die; which makes it very ſuſpicious, that there is nothing extraordinary in it, no miraculous Power of the Divine Spirit to change their Hearts in a Moment, but only the common

mon Effect of great Fear, which naturally makes Men *ſorry* for their Sins, when they come to *ſuffer* for them. Now, if ſuch dying Sinners can never be ſure, that their Sorrow for Sin is any Thing more than the Effects of Fear, they can be ſure of nothing elſe, becauſe ſuch Sorrow as this, will counterfeit all the other Acts of Repentance. Men, who are afraid of Puniſhment, are apt to flatter their Judge, and promiſe Reformation, if they could eſcape this one Time. This is ſo very common and familiar, that in all other Caſes no Man regards it. A *Judge*, a *Maſter*, or a *Father*, will not ſpare for ſuch Promiſes; and why ſhould this be thought any Thing more, in dying Sinners, than in other Offenders? Why ſhould that be thought a ſufficient Reaſon for God to pardon, which we ourſelves think no Reaſon in all other Caſes? Such Sorrow is only the Effect of Fear; and no ſuch dying Sinner can reaſonably hope, that he does truly repent: And therefore, unleſs he flatters himſelf, when he dies, with a falſe and counterfeit Repentance, as he did, while he lived, with the Hopes of repenting before he died, he muſt

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muſt expire in inexpreſſible Agonies and Fears. This is ſo miſerable a Condition, that, though we ſhould ſuppoſe ſuch a Sinner may be a true Penitent, yet no wiſe Man would endure theſe Agonies, at his laſt End, for all the Pleaſures of Sin. And yet there is no poſſible Way to avoid this, but by ſuch a timely Repentance, as may bring forth the actual Fruits of Holineſs; that, when we come to die, we may have ſome better Evidence of the Sincerity of our Repentance, than mere dying Sorrows, and Promiſes to obey.

INDEED, no one ought to limit the Mercy of God; but it is certain withal, that he cannot be impoſed upon; and, if ſo, it cannot be expected, that when, in Defiance of his Authority, and frequent Invitations to Repentance, the Sinner hath ſquandered away all his Strength and Vigour in a Courſe of Wickedneſs, God ſhould be ſo gracious to him, on his Death-Bed, as to ſupply him with that Grace, which he had idly and wantonly conſumed in ſinning againſt him; eſpecially, conſidering how often he hath declared his Reſolu-

Reſolution, to diſpenſe his Grace to us in greater or leſs Degrees, according as we have made uſe of, and improved it. For, in the *Parable* of the *Talents*, we are told, that *unto every one that hath*, that is, improveth what he hath, *ſhall be given, and he ſhall have Abundance: But, from him that hath not*, to wit, improveth not what he hath, *ſhall be taken away that which he hath.* God, therefore, having thus declared, that he will leſſen or increaſe his Grace, according as we abuſe, or improve it, we may expect, that the more we reſiſt its Motions, the weaker will be its Attempts upon us, till it is wholly withdrawn, and hath given us up to a reprobate Mind. So that, when a Sinner comes to die, he may well expect, that, if God's Grace and Aſſiſtance be not wholly taken away, yet, that it will be leſs powerful, than in the former Part of his Life; and if it be, his Condition is almoſt deſperate; for, if his Soul be not renewed and changed in a few Moments, he is undone for ever: And, ſince, to effect this Change, is a Work of ſuch great Difficulty,

SERM. XXVIII. culty, let us take care not to put off our Repentance to the laſt, or venture our Salvation upon ſo great an Uncertainty.

Which that we all may do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

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SERMON XXIX.

The Delay of CONVERSION and AMENDMENT, one great Cauſe of the bad Lives of CHRISTIANS.

PART IV.

PSALM cxix. 60.

I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

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I HAVE been ſomewhat large in ſhewing how unreaſonable and dangerous the Proceeding of thoſe Men is, who pretend to repent at the End of their Lives.

BUT all they, who delay their Converſion, do not put it off ſo long. There are many, who acknowledge, that it is dangerous to ſtay till the laſt Extremity, and that it is neceſſary to repent betimes: They purpoſe to ſet about it in a little Time, and

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hope that they ſhall repent ſoon enough, not to be ſurprized by Death; but, in the mean Time, they do little or nothing towards their Converſion. This Way of delaying is a Deluſion, which doth not appear ſo groſs and dangerous as the former, becauſe it ſuppoſes ſome Inclination to Goodneſs; but yet it is no better than an Artifice of the Heart, a Trick of Self-love, by which a Man deceives and blinds himſelf: Nay, in ſome Reſpects, the State of theſe *laſt* is more guilty and dangerous, than that of the *former*. It is more criminal, becauſe they do not, what they approve of; and becauſe they ſin againſt the conſtant Admonitions of their Conſciences, and do not perform their Reſolutions, and their Promiſes.

BESIDES, it is more dangerous; for with this Intention to repent in a little Time, they think themſelves much better than they, who are reſolved to repent only on their Death-Bed. They applaud themſelves, for ſuch a Senſe of Piety as they have; and judge, that, if they are not quite in a State of Salvation, at leaſt they are not far from it: By which Methods, they lay

lay their Conſciences aſleep, and fill them with Preſumption and Security. SERM. XXIX.

BUT, all theſe Things conſidered, they go no farther with theſe good Diſpoſitions than the other, who refer all to the End of their Lives. The only Difference is, that the *one* do all at once, what the *others* do ſucceſſively; and therefore, all that hath been ſaid againſt the *former*, may almoſt be applied to the *latter*. They run the ſame Riſque, with thoſe who deſign to repent only upon Extremity; ſince Death may ſurprize them, and, no doubt, often does, before they bring their Reſolutions to good Effect. They have as little Love for God, and are as much addicted to their Luſts, as the other. That which deceives them, is, they fancy they have in them a ſincere Purpoſe of Converſion. But if this Intention were ſincere, how comes it to paſs, that they do not repent? When a Man is reſolved upon a Thing, when his Heart is fixed upon it, when he deſires it in good Earneſt, he goes about it immediately; but when a Man uſes Delays, it is a ſhrewd Sign, he is not reſolved what he ſhall do. This Purpoſe of Converſion, and Reforma-

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tion, is, therefore, but one of thoſe waver-ing Deſigns, which ſerve to entertain and pleaſe the Mind, for the preſent; it is no more than a general, and unactive Intention, which is formed every Day, and may, perhaps, be found in all Men. But other Sort of Purpoſes are neceſſary for a Man, that really hopes and deſigns to be ſaved. Salvation is not to be obtained only by Deſigns to be ſaved, but by bringing them to Effect, and by the actual Practice of Holineſs and Obedience. Now, Men might eaſily be undeceived, and convince themſelves of the Inſufficiency of all thoſe Reſolutions of repenting, if they would but reflect upon the Time paſt, and aſk themſelves, whether they have not been very near in the ſame Reſolutions for ſeveral Years together? And yet, thoſe Intentions have produced nothing, and thoſe Reſolutions have made no Change in them; they are ſtill in the ſame State, and, perhaps, farther from reforming than ever. Muſt not Men be wilfully blind, when they do not ſee, that it will be the ſame Thing for the future, and that Life is ſlipping away in theſe perpetual Delays? For what can they promiſe

miſe to themſelves for the Time to come? And what Ground have they to hope, that it will not be like the Time paſt? Are they more firmly reſolved than they were before? When will this Reſolution be put in Practice? Will it be in a Month, or in a Year? They muſt confeſs, they know not when it will be; ſo that when they promiſe to repent, but fix no Time, they know not what they promiſe; nay, they cannot tell, whether they promiſe any Thing. They will ſay, perhaps, that they hope to confirm themſelves in a good Purpoſe: But what do they found this Hope upon? What do they wait for, or what new Thing do they imagine will befal them? Have they any Aſſurance, that God will uſe any other Means for their Converſion, than thoſe he hath uſed already? Nay, how do they know, but that they ſhall be deprived of thoſe Means and Helps, which hitherto have been offered to them? How can they tell, whether there is a *Time to come* for them, and whether their Life is not juſt at an End? All this is very *uncertain.* But what is *certainly true,* is this; that, through ſo many

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Delays, their Hearts grow harder, and their Return to Virtue becomes more difficult. The Love of Sin increaſes by the Cuſtom of ſinning; and the Means appointed to work Repentance by, grow weaker, and more languid every Day.

THESE Conſiderations plainly ſhew, that the deferring Repentance is an Error as groſs, as it is dangerous.

PERHAPS, it may not be amiſs, to add, that the Reaſon why ſo many put off their Converſion, is, becauſe they look upon Repentance as an auſtere and melancholy Duty; and this Conceit muſt needs put them upon deferring the Practice of it.

IT will, therefore, be of the greateſt Moment, to deſtroy this Prejudice; and, to ſhew, on the Contrary, that, if there is any ſad and deplorable Condition, it is that of a Man, who lives in groſs and heinous Sins; for that is either a *State* of *Fear* and *Uncertainty*, or of *Security* and *Inſenſibility*. Such a Man can have no ſolid Pleaſure, or Peace of Conſcience, during his Life: And what Terrors muſt he fall into, when the Thoughts of Death, and a Judgment to come, make ſome ſtrong Impreſſions on his

his Mind? For granting, that then he may uſe ſome Endeavours, to diſpoſe himſelf to Repentance; yet, beſides the Danger of a late Repentance, it is a ſad Thing to end Life in thoſe Struggles and Terrors, which muſt needs accompany ſuch a Repentance. A Man, therefore, that delays his Repentance, does but prolong his Miſery, and make it greater, and more hard to cure. But Joy and Tranquillity are the Portion of a pure Conſcience. There is no Felicity in this World, like that of a Soul, that is freed from the Guilt and Bondage of Sin: Repentance is the Beginning of that Happineſs, which grows ſweeter, and more perfect, according to the Progreſs and Increaſe in Goodneſs. Then it is, that a Man is happy in all the Circumſtances of Life; beſides, he hath the Comfort of being ſupported, at the Approaches of Death, with that Peace and Joy, that ariſeth from a well-grounded Faith and Confidence in God's Mercy, from the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and from a ſteady Hope of Immortality. SERM. XXIX.

I PROCEED now to conſider, and give an Anſwer to, thoſe Exhortations and Calls

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to Repentance, and the Examples we meet with in Holy Scripture, of God's pardoning every great Sinner, upon true Repentance.

As to the Exhortations, I will not quote them in particular, having done that already; but ſhall only make this general Obſervation concerning them, That they are all addreſſed to Perſons in Health, who had Time and Opportunity to repent in; and not to dying Perſons, after a long and very wicked Life. So that ſick and dying Men can have no Encouragement from any of theſe Texts, to hope for Pardon from the Shedding a few Tears, or any other Signs of Repentance they can give. *Waſh ye*, ſays God by the Prophet [a], *make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; ceaſe to do Evil, learn to do well.* Now this is a great deal more than can be done upon a Death-Bed; and, wherever actual Reformation, and *learning to do well*, is not expreſſed in any of theſe Calls and Invitations to Repentance, yet it is always implied and underſtood, in the general Words of

[a] *Iſaiah* i. 16, 17.

of repenting, or turning from our evil Ways. So that it is evident, none of theſe Texts belong to the Caſe in Hand, nor can encourage any one to delay his Converſion, in hopes of repenting on his Death-Bed. And we ſhall find all this confirmed the more, by conſidering the Examples recorded in Scripture to this Purpoſe. SERM. XXIX.

IN the Old Teſtament, the moſt remarkable are thoſe of *David* and *Manaſſes*; the firſt of which ſhews, that very good Men may be guilty of great and heinous Sins; for ſo was *David*; and may be pardoned too, if they repent ſincerely, as *David* did, and gave evident Proofs of it all his Life after. But it does not prove, that Men may lead very wicked Lives, and put off their Repentance to the laſt Extremity, and yet preſume to be pardoned, upon the Sorrow and Contrition they then expreſs: For *David* did not ſo; but immediately, upon the Meſſage brought him by the Prophet, repented; and never fell into the like Sin again. *Manaſſes*, indeed, had been all along a very great Sinner, and was not brought to a Senſe of his Offences,

SERM. XXIX. Offences, till he was carried Captive into *Babylon*, and was awakened by Afflictions: But then, thoſe Afflictions did not find him at the Point of Death; he did not reſolve to repent, when he found he could live no longer: No, he had Time and Opportunity to appeaſe God, and convince others of the Sincerity of his Amendment, as appears by the Prayer he left behind him.

THE Inſtances of the New Teſtament, are the *Woman*, who was a *Sinner*; *Zacheus*, St. *Peter*, and the *Thief* upon the *Croſs*; as likewiſe the *Parable* of the *Prodigal Son*, and the *Labourers* in the *Vineyard*. From which Inſtances, and from our Saviour's Declaration, that he *came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*, it is concluded, that the greateſt Sinners may obtain Salvation, if they do repent, though ever ſo late, as well as the Juſt. But if they, who quote theſe Inſtances, would but thorougly examine them, they would find nothing at all, in any of them, to ſupport their Confidence. For, in the firſt Place, theſe Sinners mentioned in the Goſpel, did repent, and were actually converted,

verted, as appears in the Courſe of their Lives. SERM. XXIX.

THE *Woman*, who had been a notorious Sinner, expreſſes the moſt lively Sorrow for her Crimes, and, ever after, attended our Bleſſed Saviour, during the whole Courſe of his Miniſtry; which is ſomething more than being ſorry on a Death-Bed.

THE *Prodigal* comes to himſelf again, before he was ſeized by the Fear of Death; he deteſts his former Ways; and, for ever after, lived in Obedience to his Father's Will: Beſides, we muſt obſerve, that this was his firſt Offence, though it was a very great one, and continued a long Time; and, perhaps, it was for this Reaſon, that he ſo eaſily obtained *Forgiveneſs*. But, if we ſhould ſuppoſe, that this *Prodigal*, after his Reconcilement to his Father, had relapſed into his former ill Courſes, and continued therein, till Death had ſummoned him to Judgment; and, that then he ſhould think of repenting again, and being reconciled to his Father; Could we imagine, that, in ſuch a Caſe as this, his Father would again receive him? This no Man can believe. And the ſame may be ſaid of St. *Peter*.

SERM. XXIX. *ter.* He did not long perſiſt in the Denial of his Maſter; but, upon the firſt Check of our Saviour, *went out, and wept bitterly*; and never after offended in like Manner.

ZACHEUS, if he was an unjuſt Man, made ample Amendment, by reſtoring four-fold.

FROM theſe Inſtances we may infer, that God never rejects returning Sinners, who repent ſufficiently, and in Time. But even this is an invincible Argument, that there is little Hopes of Mercy for thoſe, who knowingly perſiſt in their Sins to the laſt, and that too, in Hopes of being pardoned then. Beſides, we muſt know, that our Saviour's Deſign in all theſe Parables, and Inſtances, was to inform Men, that he was come to invite the greateſt Sinners to Repentance; and eſpecially, to let the *Jews* know, that, for all the great Opinion they had of their own Dignity and Merit, the *Heathens*, who, till then, lived in the greateſt Corruption, were to be admitted into God's Covenant, and to have an equal Share of his Favour; which actually happened to all thoſe *Heathens*, who did believe in Jeſus Chriſt.

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THE Inſtances and Parables, then, repreſent the State of Men, as they were at the Time our Saviour began to preach; and not the State of thoſe, who are entered already into the chriſtian Church, and have all along enjoyed the Means and Offers of Salvation. And, we ought always to obſerve, that there is a great Difference between thoſe *Jews* and *Heathens*, who never heard of Chriſt, and Chriſtians, who are born ſuch, and live in the Covenant of God.

As for the Inſtance of the *Thief on the Croſs*, though it is much inſiſted upon, and ſeems to come the neareſt to the Caſe of dying Penitents; yet, in reality it does not: For, firſt, it is commonly ſuppoſed, though without any Foundation, that this Thief repented only on the Croſs; and that his Converſion was the Effect of a ſudden Inſpiration. But who can tell whether his Converſion was not begun, either before he was taken, or, at leaſt in Priſon, where, it is very probable, he was kept for ſome Time, before the *Feaſt* of the *Paſſover*? Beſides, it is very likely he had heard of Chriſt, and his Miracles, before he came

to

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to ſuffer, and was acquainted with the Opinion ſome had, that he was the *Meſſiah*, whom God had promiſed to ſend into the World. For we can hardly think, that any Man, who lived in thoſe Days, ſhould never have heard of Chriſt, whoſe Fame was ſpread throughout the Nation. But yet, that Courſe of Life this Thief led, gave him no great Curioſity to inquire into ſuch Matters, till he was apprehended for Robbery, and condemned to die at the ſame Time with Chriſt. This extraordinary Accident might make him more carefully inquire after him, and learn all the Circumſtances of his Apprehenſion, Trial, Uſage, Behaviour, and Anſwers; and eſpecially when he ſaw him, and was to die with him: And, in ſhort, he might, by comparing one Thing with another, be convinced, that he was the true *Meſſiah*, though he ſaw him in ſo ſhameful a Manner nailed to the Croſs. But, if his Converſion muſt be allowed to be ſudden, and wrought a few Moments before his Death; if we muſt impute it to a miraculous Inſpiration, which hath no Foundation in the Story, and is without any Precedent, or Example;

ple; yet, it does not appear, what can be inferred from this Inſtance to the Comfort of dying Sinners, or the Delaying our Repentance; ſince no Man living can aſſure himſelf, that any ſuch ſhall befal him. But, be it as it will, we ought to obſerve a great Difference between the *State* of this *Thief*, and *that* of a *baptized Chriſtian*. This poor Wretch had not been called before, as Chriſtians are; he had, for ought appears, never known our Saviour; or, at leaſt, he had not profeſſed his Religion; he had not had thoſe Illuminations, and thoſe Opportunities, which God, in his Mercy, offers every Day to thoſe, to whom the Goſpel is preached; and though his Repentance came late, yet it came as ſoon as could be expected; and, therefore, might be as effectual to Salvation, as that of the Heathens, who embraced Chriſtianity in their riper Years, and who happened to die immediately after Baptiſm. SERM. XXIX.

THIS Example, then, of the *Thief upon the Croſs*, is no Manner of Encouragement to any baptized Chriſtian, to lead a wicked Life, and delay his Repentance to the Time of

SERM. XXIX. of his Death, in hopes of being pardoned, and ſaved at the laſt, as he was.

AND yet this is the only Example, that can be alledged to prove the Sufficiency of a Death-Bed Repentance.

As for the Parable of the *Labourers*, who were called to work in the Vineyard, at different Hours, that is nothing to the Purpoſe. For the ſeveral Hours of the Day, in that Parable, do not ſignify the ſeveral Hours of Mens Lives, but the different Ages of the World; and, therefore, thoſe Labourers, who were called into the Vineyard, about the eleventh Hour of the World, that is, towards the End, or laſt Age thereof, might be called at the Beginning of their Lives, and work on to the End of them. For the Deſign of this Parable is to ſhew, that the *Gentiles*, who were called into the Vineyard, or received into the Church of Chriſt, towards the Concluſion of the World, ſhould be admitted to equal Privileges, and Rewards, with the *Jews*, who were God's ancient People, and had been called into the Vineyard early in the Morning; which occaſioned their murmuring againſt the good Man of the Houſe;

Houſe; as we know the *Jews* murmured upon this Account, and were greatly prejudiced againſt the Goſpel, becauſe the *Gentiles* were received into the Church, without being circumciſed. And this muſt be the true Meaning of the Text, becauſe it is not conſiſtent with the Juſtice of God, that they, who begin to live well at the End of their Lives, ſhould be equally rewarded with thoſe, who have ſpent their whole Time in his Service; which is directly contrary to the Parables of the *Pounds* and *Talents*. SERM. XXIX.

BUT ſuppoſe this Parable were to be underſtood, not of the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian Church*, but of particular Chriſtians; yet their being called to work in the Vineyard, at what Hour ſoever it was, though the *eleventh*, was their firſt Admiſſion into the Chriſtian Church, their firſt Converſion to the Faith of Chriſt; and from that Time they laboured in the Vineyard, and lived a holy and religious Life. And ſhould an Heathen be converted to Chriſtianity, even at the *eleventh* Hour, that is, at the latter Part of his Life, and, from that Time live as becometh the Goſpel, no doubt, but he

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would be greatly rewarded: But what is this to any of us, who were born of Chriſtian Parents, baptized in our very Infancy, and have all along profeſſed the Faith of Chriſt, and yet lived as *Heathens?* We were not called into the Vineyard at the *eleventh Hour*, but early in the Morning; and though Men, who were called at the laſt Hour, ſhall be rewarded for that Hour's Work, yet this doth not prove, that they, who have trifled away their Time till the *eleventh Hour*, ſhall receive a Day's Wages.

BUT, ſuppoſe they might; yet this doth not come up to the Caſe of a Death-Bed Repentance, becauſe ſuch Men do not delay till the *eleventh Hour*, but till Night comes, when *no Man can work*; whereas thoſe, who came laſt into the Vineyard, wrought an Hour. Now, though God, through his Goodneſs, will reward Men for one Hour's Work, yet this can never prove, that he will reward thoſe who do not work at all.

THINK, therefore, on theſe Things, and let us beg of God, that, through his Grace, we may not pervert his Scriptures,

which were written for our Salvation, to our own Deſtruction; but that, by a conſtant and faithful Diſcharge of the Duties commanded us, we may have a ſure Hope, and certain Aſſurance, of a *Reward*. SERM. XXIX.

Which that we may all obtain, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XXX.

Our wicked INCLINATIONS the real CAUSE of our TEMPTATIONS.

JAMES i. 13, 14.

Let no Man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man: But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.

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THERE is ſomething in Sin, ſo diſagreeable to the Mind of Man, that he hath no ſooner committed any Thing, that his Conſcience can charge him with as ſuch, than he is endeavouring to excuſe himſelf, either by attempting to prove, that what he hath committed, is not evil; or, if that will not do,

do, by throwing the Blame upon the Frailty of human Nature, as unable to overcome the Temptations that daily beſet it; or, upon the Devil, who, he pretends, is too artful and cunning for him; nay, ſometimes he will go ſo far, as to accuſe God himſelf, and impiouſly charge him as the Author of his own Wickedneſs. SERM. XXX.

To this Charge the Apoſtle anſwers, in the Words of the Text: *Let no Man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man: But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.*

AND in diſcourſing upon them, I will ſhew, that we have no Authority, from Reaſon or Scripture, to aſſert, that our Temptations are from God; but, that the real Cauſe of them, are our own wicked Inclinations.

THE Almighty Being is too perfect to have any Inclination or Bias to Evil: He hath no Wants, that may urge him to commit it; and, as he is infinitely happy in himſelf, ſo he is too good to lay Traps and Snares in the Way of his Creatures:

SERM. XXX. He means nothing but their Good and Happineſs, and, whenſoever they fail of it, they can accuſe no one juſtly, but their own Folly and Preſumption. And ſo far is the Scripture from aſcribing any of the Temptations, we are aſſaulted with in the Courſe of our Lives, to Almighty God, that, on the contrary, it deſcribes him not only as free from Sin himſelf, but as a perfect Abhorrer of it, and as one, *who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity.*

THOSE Places in Scripture, wherein *God* is ſaid to *tempt* his Creatures; and others, wherein we pray, that *God* would *not lead us into Temptation*, give no Countenance to ſuppoſe, that our Temptations are from him.

THE firſt Place, where God is ſaid *to tempt*, is in the Caſe of *Abraham*[a]: *And it came to paſs after theſe Things, that God did tempt Abraham, and ſaid unto him, Abraham. And he ſaid, Behold, here I am. And he ſaid, Take now thy Son, thine only Son Iſaac, whom thou loveſt, and get thee into the Land of Moriah; and offer him there for a Burnt-Offering.*

BUT,

[a] *Gen.* xxii. 1, &c.

BUT, here, it muſt be obſerved, that God did not intend, that *Abraham* ſhould actually ſacrifice his Son; he only commanded the Patriarch to do it, that he might prove his Fidelity and Obedience to him: Here was no Deſign in the Almighty, to ſuffer, or command his Servant to do any Thing ſo unnatural and inhuman; but, on the contrary, by this Inſtance of his Readineſs to obey him, by the ſevereſt Trial of his Faith, and Truſt in him, God deſigned in a particular Manner to bleſs him: *Becauſe*, ſays God, *thou haſt done this Thing, and haſt not with-held thy Son, thine only Son, in bleſſing I will bleſs thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy Seed as the Stars of the Heaven, and as the Sand which is upon the Sea Shore; and thy Seed ſhall poſſeſs the Gate of his Enemies; and in thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed: Becauſe thou haſt obeyed my Voice*[a].

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THUS we ſee, the only End God had in all this Trial, was, that he might have a further Opportunity of bleſſing his faithful Servant, that his Virtues might be approved

[a] *Gen.* xxii. 16, 17, 18.

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proved and made manifeſt to the World here, and to Men and Angels hereafter.

FRIVOLOUS, therefore, are the Objections of Infidels againſt this Fact, as if it were inconſiſtent with the Goodneſs of God, to command his Creatures to do any Thing ſo inhuman, as is the Offering one's own Children in Obedience to him. For God's Deſign was not to permit *Abraham* to do this Thing; it was only, as I obſerved before, commanded by Way of Trial; and, ſurely, God hath a *Right* to lay what Trials he pleaſes upon Mankind, and it is their Duty to pay an entire Submiſſion to his Will.

How, alſo, *Abraham* could be ſatisfied, that this Command came from God, hath been made another Queſtion: And Infidels have boldly aſſerted, that *Abraham* could not be ſure he was not deceived, becauſe it was contrary to all Juſtice and Reaſon.

BUT to this we may anſwer, that *Abraham* had frequent Intercourſes with the Almighty; and that, therefore, however ſtrange and unaccountable ſuch a Command might appear to us, who are unacquainted with ſuch extraordinary Communications

munications of the Divine Will, he muſt be perfectly ſatisfied, that it was the ſame God, who had on ſo many other Occaſions appeared to, and converſed with him. SERM. XXX.

WITHOUT doubt, this was the ſevereſt Trial that human Nature could undergo, and required all that Reſolution, that the ſtrongeſt Faith and Truſt in God could give him: But, when we conſider alſo, how many extraordinary Inſtances *Abraham* had already received of God's Favours toward him, and that even this Son, whom God had now commanded to be ſacrificed, was given him at a Time, when, by the ordinary Courſe of Nature, he could not poſſibly have expected one; I ſay, when we conſider this, we may ſuppoſe, that *Abraham* concluded with himſelf, that God would make him Amends ſome Way or other, or even raiſe him from the Dead again. And that he did comfort himſelf with ſuch Hopes, under the Sharpneſs of this Trial, we have the Teſtimony of St. *Paul* to confirm, who tells us, that, *By Faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Iſaac, accounting that God was able to raiſe him up, even from the Dead*[a].

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[a] *Heb.* xi. 17,--19.

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THESE Conſiderations, as they ſhew us the Deſign of God in *tempting Abraham*, ſo they vindicate him from the Charges that are brought againſt him, and convince us, that it was right and commendable in him, to be willing to part with the Son of his Love, in Obedience to God's Command, which he received by immediate Revelation; and of whoſe *Right* over the Life of any, or all his Creatures, he was moſt ſtedfaſtly perſuaded.

So alſo, when our Bleſſed Saviour bids us *pray, that God would not lead us into Temptation*, the Meaning is, that God would be pleaſed, not to ſuffer us to *be tempted above what we are able, but that he would with the Temptation, alſo, make a Way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it:* And, particularly, that he would not give us up, in his Anger, to the Power of Temptations, as he did the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, when *he gave them up unto their own Hearts Luſts, and let them follow their own Imaginations:* Becauſe, God does puniſh great and notorious Sinners, in ſuffering them to fall into great Temptations; but then, it is after they have become obſtinate

obſtinate in Sin, and are quite incorrigible. Thus, when Mens Hearts are ſaid to be hardened, the Meaning is not, that they are hardened by any proper Act of God, but by his giving them up to their own Hearts Luſts. SERM. XXX.

AND in this Senſe we are to underſtand the Caſe of *Pharaoh*: When the Miracles, that were wrought by *Moſes*, had not that good Effect upon him, as they ought to have had, they made him ſo much the more obſtinate, and hardened him againſt any Conviction.

So alſo, when it is ſaid, that God *hath blinded their Eyes, and hardened their Heart, that they ſhould not ſee with their Eyes, nor underſtand with their Heart, and be converted, and I ſhould heal them*; the Meaning is not, that God did actually harden the Hearts of the *Jews* that they might not believe, that that Prophecy might be fulfilled; but, that the Prophecy would be fulfilled, becauſe God foreſaw that the *Jews* would not believe.

IN like Manner, when the Prophet ſays, *Lord, why haſt thou made us to err from thy Ways, and hardened our Heart from*

SERM. XXX. *from thy Fear*[a]? he does not mean to charge the Sins of the People upon God, but to expreſs his Grief and Concern, that the *Jews* were in Fact ſo corrupted.

THUS we ſee, there is no Foundation for Men to charge God as the Author of their Sins; for nothing is more contrary to the holy and righteous Nature of that infinitely good Being, and to thoſe plain Declarations he hath made of himſelf, than to ſeduce Men to do wickedly; and, therefore, no one, that hath any Regard to the Honour of God, ought to entertain the leaſt Suſpicion of his having any Hand in the Sins of Men: But every Man is then tempted, when, by his own Luſts, and vicious Inclinations, he is ſeduced to Evil. Men are betrayed by themſelves, and the Temptation without hath a Party within them, which is ready to comply and give Conſent to it: And therefore, as the Apoſtle acquits God from being the Author of our Sins, by any Temptation that may lay in our Way to commit them; ſo he lays the Blame of them entirely upon ourſelves: *Every Man is tempted, when he is drawn*

[a] *Iſaiah* lxiii. 17.

drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed. SERM. XXX.

VICIOUS Inclinations are the Deſires of our own Minds: And, as the Gratifications of theſe Deſires, we know, are contrary to right Reaſon, and the Laws of God, it is our own Fault if we do not reſtrain them, and keep them within due Bounds; and, we ſhall be juſtly puniſhed if we neglect to do it.

INSTEAD, therefore, of deceiving ourſelves, by laying the Blame of our Sins upon that which is not the Occaſion of them, let us endeavour to prevent them; and then, by God's Grace and the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, we ſhall be able to overcome: For God hath put it in our own Power to reſiſt Temptations, if we would make uſe of our natural Reaſon, and thoſe Helps, which the Goſpel affords us.

THERE are ſome Sins ſo ſhocking to human Nature, that a Man makes no Difficulty not to commit them: Such, for Inſtance, is *deliberate Murder*, the very ſuppoſing of which in the Mind, fills it with unſpeakable Horror: And every other Sin,

and

SERM. XXX. and the Temptations to it, might be as eaſily reſiſted, if we would make uſe of thoſe Rules, that God hath given us in his holy Writings for that Purpoſe.

FOR Inſtance: Are we under the Oppreſſions and Hardſhips of Poverty? Though theſe are ſtrong Temptations to human Nature, and are apt to tempt Men to unjuſt and diſhoneſt Shifts for a Livelihood; yet, if we would conſider, that all Things are for the beſt, and that Providence, who cannot mean us ill, hath placed us in theſe Circumſtances, this will learn us not to murmur at our own Condition, or utter any diſcontented Word, at the Plenty and Proſperity of other Men; we ſhall conſider our Condition as moſt proper for us, and that God hath afflicted us, only for the Exerciſe and Improvement of our Virtue, as St. *James* ſays, *My Brethren, count it all Joy, when ye fall into divers Temptations; knowing this, that the Trial of your Faith worketh Patience* [a]; and in another Place, he ſays, *Bleſſed is the Man that endureth Temptation; for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him* [b].

THESE

[a] *James* i. 2. [b] Ver. 12.

THESE and ſuch like Reflections will make poor Men refrain from wicked and immoral Courſes, and encourage them to conquer the Temptations, that the Narrowneſs of their Circumſtances might otherwiſe expoſe them to. SERM. XXX.

ARE we rich and proſperous in the World? Though Riches and Affluence are great Incentives to many Luſts, and puſh us on to the Commiſſion of many Sins, upon which Account *Agur* prayed to God, *that he would not give him Riches, leſt he ſhould be full and deny him*; let us not, however, ungratefully charge God with the Blame of what we do amiſs, for every Temptation that Riches bring along with them, may be overcome by an honeſt and faithful Management of them: Inſtead of pampering our Luſts, we may employ them in Acts of Charity and Benevolence, in righting the Injured, in relieving the Oppreſſed, in feeding the Hungry, and in cloathing the Naked: For rich Men have great Power to do Good, and, if they do it not, God will ſeverely account with them for their Neglect. It will ſtand them in no ſtead, to accuſe the Greatneſs and

Power

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Power of the Temptations, with which they were assaulted and overcome, or to insinuate their Inability to withstand them; God will put it to their own Consciences to determine, whether they did their utmost to oppose them, or whether they did not yield contrary to their Judgment, and to the Sense they had of their Duty to him: And I believe, that every wicked Man will be condemned by his own Conscience; he will confess, that he did not do his utmost to oppose Temptations, but sided with his own wicked Heart, and, to please his Appetites, gave up his Innocence.

SINCE, therefore, every Man hath Reason enough to blame himself for the Evil he does, let us not endeavour to shift off the Blame from ourselves; but, being conscious of our Guilt, let us repent of our Sins, and pray to God, that he would not permit us to fall into them any more; for, unless we are kept, by the Providence of God, out of the Way of violent Temptations, such is the Frailty of our own Hearts, and so many are the irregular Desires and Appetites in the best of us, that

we

we are eaſily drawn in, to commit Folly, and all Iniquity with Greedineſs. SERM. XXX.

BUT, by keeping up in our Minds, a continual Senſe of our own Weakneſs, and daily Want of God's Aſſiſtance, we ſhall be cautious how we come into the Way of Temptations, and never ceaſe to beg of God, that he would keep us from the Power of them.

IN particular, let no Man deceive himſelf with any falſe Notion, that his Sins will be excuſed upon Account of the Greatneſs of the Temptations, or the Frailty and Infirmity of human Nature; and therefore give himſelf little or no Trouble to reſiſt them: For, though God will make all reaſonable Allowances for the Difficulties, we may, in our different Circumſtances, labour under; yet we are to remember, that it is our Duty to oppoſe Temptations; it is the Trial, by which we are to manifeſt our Love and Obedience to the Almighty; it is the Race that he hath ſet before us to run, and the Warfare that he hath commanded us to fight; and, therefore, we ought to be always upon our Duty, to ſhew ourſelves diligent and brave

SERM. XXX. in the Station we are placed, and never to desert our Post, or by a shameful Cowardice yield up ourselves Prisoners and Captives, when it is in our Power to conquer.

LASTLY, As the best Preservative against Temptations, let us mortify our vicious Inclinations; for, the true Reason why Men fall into Sin, is not, because they are tempted, but because there is something within them, by which they are inclined to comply with the Temptation: But the more we mortify ourselves, the more we shall be out of the Power of them: And then, upon our humble Application to God, for his assisting and preventing Grace, we shall be more able to subdue our rebellious Passions; for his Assistance is never wanting to second our virtuous Endeavours, and no one, that ever sincerely asked this of him, was disappointed. For, as God created us for Happiness, so he will do every Thing on his Part, that tends to promote it.

LET us therefore my Brethren, apply ourselves to him, who is thus able and willing to assist us, and *who*, we are assured, *will not suffer us to betempted above what we are able, but will with the Temptation make a Way*

to

to escape, whereby we may be able to bear it. And let us beg of him, that he would grant us his Grace to withstand the Temptations of the World, and with pure Hearts and Minds to follow him, the only true God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen.*

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SERMON XXXI.

The TERRORS of the LORD, a perſuaſive ARGUMENT to Holineſs and Righteouſneſs of LIFE.

2 COR. v. 11.

Knowing, therefore, the Terrors of the Lord, we perſuade Men.

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THE Thoughts of a future State is a Subject of the greateſt Satisfaction, or the moſt dreadful Apprehenſion, according as it becomes the Meditation of good or bad Men; and, conſequently, Death, which is the Entrance into it, appears either terrible, or inviting, agreeable to the different Actions, and Lives, that Men have led in this World. A future State, to a good Man, is the moſt comfortable, the moſt engaging Proſpect in Nature; every Look towards, and every Reflection on it, gives unſpeakable Satisfaction, and blunts the Edge of the ſharp-

eſt Afflictions: In a Word, it is a Solace in all his Misfortunes, and a Balm for every Wound. SERM. XXXI.

THROUGH an Expectation of this, he keeps himſelf ſteady in his Courſe of Virtue; and being certain of that great Reward before him, overlooks the vain Pleaſures and Amuſements of this World, as below the Notice of a wiſe Man; and deſpiſes the ill Treatment he receives from wicked and prophane Men, as light Afflictions, that will ſoon vaniſh, and be no more.

AND, as to *Death*, he looks upon him as his *Friend*, gives him the heartieſt Welcome, and embraces him, as one that is going to do him the moſt ſignal Piece of Service; that is, to remove him from a wicked World, and the Contagion of bad Men; to free him from all thoſe Infirmities that now torment him, and open him a Paſſage to that happy Place, where Sin, and Sickneſs, and Pain ſhall be no more.

SUCH were the Expectations, that made the good Apoſtle long to be diſſolved, and *to be with Chriſt*. The happy Proſpect of Futurity raviſhed his Soul, and that third Heaven which he had once ſeen, and thoſe unſpeakable

SERM. XXXI.

ſpeakable Words which he then heard, could never be forgot. All the Calamities he met with, were indifferent to him; and even Death itſelf had no Sting.

BUT with the Wicked, it is not ſo: The View of Death to them, is a gloomy uncomfortable Proſpect, and fills their Souls with Anguiſh and Anxiety. Every Reflection upon it, is full of Horror; and Diſtruſt and Suſpicion torment their guilty Minds. To theſe unhappy Men, Death, indeed, may be juſtly ſaid to be a *King of Terrors*, being their greateſt, and moſt to be dreaded Enemy; as it delivers them over to that great Tribunal, where they ſhall receive the Things done in their Body, and be rewarded, or puniſhed, according to that they have done, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil. *Knowing, therefore, the Terrors of the Lord, we perſuade Men.*

THE Words before us are an Inference drawn from the Certainty of a Reſurrection, and are a noble Inſtance of that generous Concern, which good Men have for all Mankind, who always find their own Happineſs improved in Proportion to their being

being ſerviceable to their Fellow-Creatures. SERM. *Knowing therefore*, ſays the Apoſtle, *the* XXXI. *Terrors of the Lord, we perſuade Men*: Being aſſured, that there will come a Day, when all Mankind will be puniſhed, or rewarded, according as they have behaved in this Life, we particularly inſiſt upon this awful Subject, that others may be perſuaded of the Truth of it, and in ſuch a Manner live here, that they may find Favour in that great and dreadful Day of the Lord.

THERE having been but few that have really diſbelieved a future State, it will be unneceſſary to trouble you with Arguments drawn from the Nature of the human Soul, or Goodneſs of God, in Proof of it: I ſhall therefore, in diſcourſing upon this Subject, only recommend ſuch a Behaviour, as ſober Reaſon will convince us is right; and, what our merciful Saviour will applaud, and reward us for, when he ſhall come to judge the World.

THIS Behaviour is very comprehenſively expreſſed by St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to *Titus*, in theſe Words, that *we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent*

SERM. XXXI. *World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

UNDER the Expression of *living soberly*, is included, whatever relates to the due Moderation of our Appetites, and an exact and wise Government of our Passions.

IN living righteously, is comprehended the Duty we owe to our Neighbour, to be true and just in all our Dealings with him, to be faithful to our Promises, to do no Injury to his good Name, Estate, or Person; but so to behave in all our Actions, as we expect he should behave towards us.

AND, *living godly in this present World*, is to have a great Esteem of God in our Minds, to acknowledge his Perfections, and our continual Dependence on his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness; to ascribe all the Mercies we enjoy, to his free Goodness; and to express our Gratitude to him, by our constant and publick Praises and Thanksgivings.

To yield him also a firm Assent to all his Revelations; to depend on his doing what is best for us; to value him as our chief Good; to live constantly in his Fear, and to acquaint ourselves with his holy Will;

Will; that we may pay him a ſincere, chearful, and regular Obedience, delighting to do what is pleaſing to him; and, when we are convinced that we have done amiſs, to repent of our Follies, and to take care that we do ſo no more. SERM. XXXI.

ALL this is implied in *living ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World*; and unleſs we endeavour to live thus, we can with no Comfort look *for that bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

FOR, at that great Day of Aſſize, all the Actions of our Lives will be examined, and our moſt private Thoughts will come under the Cognizance of the divine Tribunal; for, as *God ſearcheth all Hearts, and underſtandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts*, ſo he will call us to an Account for all the Impurity of the Soul, and will puniſh the Indulgence of our impious Thoughts, as well as our unjuſt Actions; for they are both equally diſpleaſing to him. And if our *Thoughts*, much more will our *Words* be judged; for, as nothing more conduceth to make Men either virtuous, or wicked, than as they talk and converſe with each other, ſo our Saviour hath told

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told us, that we ſhall be called to an Account for every Word we ſpeak; and be juſtified or condemned, according as they are good or evil. Which, as it is a great Encouragement to promote religious Converſation; ſo it ſhould be a moſt powerful Motive to ſuppreſs all impious and prophane Diſcourſe: Since every good Piece of Advice, every kind Inſtruction, and every ſeaſonable Reproof, which we have made uſe of to reform and amend our Fellow-Creatures, though we uſed them in vain, will be remembered in that Day, and we ſhall in no wiſe lo ſeour Reward: And ſince, on the other Hand, all impious and prophane Expreſſions, all unclean and wanton Diſcourſes, all paſſionate and bitter Revilings, malicious Slanders, and envious Backbitings, that have been the Employment and Entertainment of bad Men, will then be their Shame and Condemnation.

AND much more will our Actions of all Kinds be diſcloſed; for *God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every ſecret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* All thoſe good and virtuous Actions, that were done by good Men in

in their ſecret Retirements, which they ſtu- SERM.
dioufly kept from the Knowledge of Men, XXXI.
and performed only for God's Sake, ſhall be then publickly diſcovered, and be greatly rewarded.

AND, on the other Hand, all thoſe private Works of Darkneſs, that feared the Knowledge of Men, more than the Preſence of God, and eſcaped the Puniſhment, which they deſerved in this World, ſhall then be expoſed before Men and Angels, and be puniſhed with the greateſt Severity.

NAY, we ſhall not only be accountable for the Actions that we have done ourſelves, but we ſhall be accountable for the Actions of other Men, as far as we, either by our Example, or our Solicitation, have been the Occaſion of them; which ſhould make us very careful how we behave, leſt our Accounts ſhould be greater than we think of, and our Condemnation ſeverer than we imagined.

BUT, if to this Certainty of being called to an Account at the laſt Day for all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, we add the Uncertainty of our Lives, and the ſevere Puniſhment we ſhall undergo, if we

are

SERM. XXXI. are found unprepared at that Time, it ſhould learn us all to keep ourſelves in Readineſs to enter in with our heavenly Bridegroom, at whatſoever Hour he ſhall pleaſe to call us.

As to the Uncertainty of our Lives; one would ſuppoſe that, conſidering every one ſo readily acknowledges the Truth of it, no Perſon ſhould be unprepared for any Accident that might happen: But ſo it is, as a wiſe *Heathen* obſerved, we are always complaining of the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of human Life, and yet live as if we ſhould never die. We are all like the rich fooliſh Man in the Goſpel; we enlarge our Barns, and are continually heaping up Riches, as if we were ſure of living here, and of enjoying them, as long as we pleaſe. The daily Departure of our Friends gives little or no Uneaſineſs to us; we hardly imagine, that we are Travellers in the ſame Road, or that we ſhall ever arrive at our Journey's End. If we have Plenty of Spirits, a Strength of Conſtitution, and an healthful Body, we conſider not, that a ſingle Convulſion may ſhake us into Pieces,

Pieces, and a Moment's Stopping of the Blood ſink us into Duſt. SERM. XXXI.

But we ought continually to reflect upon the Uncertainty of our Continuance here, and the Danger we ſhall be in, if we have not properly and wiſely behaved ourſelves. They, who think it will be Time enough to repent at their laſt Hours, ſhould conſider, that it is one of the moſt difficult Things in the World, for a Man to reſolve to lead a good Life, who hath been long accuſtomed to the contrary. It is in a Manner to declare War againſt himſelf; and he will find it a moſt arduous Undertaking to ſubdue his Appetites, to overcome his Luſts, and reduce his Deſires within their juſt Bounds. Upon which Account, it muſt be very hazardous, as well as imprudent, to leave all this to be done at a Time the moſt improper for it.

For the Weakneſs and Indiſpoſition, that we may labour under at that Time, may wholly diſable, or at leaſt weaken our Underſtanding, ſo that we ſhall not be able to do any Thing for our Souls. And the Confuſion we ſhall then be in, at the dread-

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dreadful Proſpect of Eternity, will make it almoſt impoſſible for us to think ſeriouſly, and range our Thoughts in a proper Order. And we can have little Reaſon to expect God's Aſſiſtance, who, in the Time of our Health, neglected the gracious, and repeated Calls of his Holy Spirit within us, and were reſolved not to repent till we could ſin no longer.

But, ſuppoſing our Repentance effectual, we can never be ſure of it; becauſe it is made at a Time, when we have great Reaſon to ſuſpect our Sincerity; we may doubt whether it be ſo much the Conviction of our Mind, as the melancholy Condition we are at preſent in; and, if it ſhould pleaſe God to reſtore us to our Health, whether we ſhould not return to our former Follies. For, as theſe Reſolutions are made at a Seaſon, when Temptations are at a Diſtance, and when we have no Reliſh for the Pleaſures of Sin, we may juſtly ſuſpect them, and ſuppoſe them rather the Effects of Fear, than the Produce of right Reaſon. And, indeed, a Man muſt have either a very ſtupid, or a very ſeared Con-

Conſcience, that can be unconcerned, when Death is, as it were, ſounding the Trumpet of Judgment in his Ears, and calling him to appear before the divine Tribunal, to give an Account of the Actions of his paſt Life. SERM. XXXI.

IN this Diſtreſs, unleſs he hath loſt all Senſe of his Danger, he muſt and will reſolve upon Amendment for the future, though it is more than a Thouſand to one, that he makes uſe of this only as an Expedient for the preſent Extremity; and that, when he ſhall be reſtored to his Health again, he will embrace his old Companions, and forget thoſe Reſolutions that he made only to ſoften the Reproaches of his Conſcience.

IF, therefore, a late Repentance be ſo dangerous, and the Sincerity of it ſo very ſuſpicious; let us ſet ourſelves about the great Work of our Salvation, and not loſe a Moment more in deferring, what ought to be the whole Employment of our Lives. Let the Terrors of the Lord awake us into a Senſe of our Danger. Let our eternal Intereſt provoke us to be good; nor let us be ſo unkind to our Souls, for which

Chriſt

SERM. XXXI. Chriſt died, and for which he thought no Affliction too great to ſuffer, as to be careleſs about their everlaſting Condition. If we would be as diligent in promoting our eternal Intereſt, as we are in the trifling and petty Concerns of this Life, we ſhould find more ſolid Satisfaction in every freſh Acquiſition of Virtue, than we can poſſibly meet with in enlarging our Fortunes: For theſe are liable to many Accidents, though we may be ever ſo careful to ſecure them; but our Virtues, unleſs it be our own Faults, will continue with us, when every Thing elſe ſhall be no more.

HOWEVER durable the material World may ſeem, it will have an End; the Sun itſelf ſhall periſh, and the Elements ſhall melt away with fervent Heat: But Virtue ſhall be ſafe in the univerſal Deſtruction, and, like the God it ſerves, ſhall continue for ever.

LET us, therefore, having ſo glorious a Proſpect before us, and ſuch a Reward for the ſhort Labour of a few Years, contend, who ſhall be firſt in the Race of Virtue, and *ſo run that* we *may obtain.* The little Difficulties

culties, and Mortifications, that we may meet with in the Practice of ſome particular Duties, will be not regarded, if we keep in View the great and unſpeakable Recompence of Reward, that is laid up for thoſe that perſevere unto the End, and the terrible Puniſhments, that await thoſe that obey not the Goſpel. SERM. XXXI.

WHEN, therefore, we are in Danger of Temptations, let us look beyond the narrow Proſpect of this Life; let us ſuppoſe the Judge of the whole World upon his Tribunal, the Archangels ſounding the Trump of God, and ſummoning Mankind to appear before him; *below*, the *Earth* and the *Sea* diſgorging their Dead, and the whole human Race lead to Judgment, under the Conduct and Guidance of inferior Angels. Then let us aſk ourſelves, what Anſwer we ſhall be able to make in Excuſe of our Sins, before the great and impartial Judge, who can neither be deceived by any falſe Pretences, nor biaſſed by any partial Fondneſs for us. Do we plead the *Infirmities of human Nature*, and the general Practice of the World? Oh! let us

SERM. XXXI. remember, that Chriſt came into the World, that he might purchaſe to himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works; and that we are commanded, *not to follow a Multitude to do Evil.*

OR, do we rely on the Mercy of our Judge? If we do, let us take Care that we deceive not ourſelves. For though God's Mercies fail not, yet none can be Objects of his Favour, but they, who have made themſelves capable of it. For as he is merciful, ſo he is juſt; and he will deal with every Perſon, according to their juſt Deſerts. For, *Who* (as the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom* expreſſes himſelf) *ſhall accuſe thee for the Nations that periſh, whom thou haſt made? Or, who ſhall come to ſtand againſt thee, to be revenged for the unrighteous Men?—Foraſmuch as thou art righteous thyſelf, thou ordereſt all Things righteouſly; thinking it not agreeable with thy Power, to condemn him that hath not deſerved to be puniſhed*[a].

IF theſe Things be ſo, *what manner of Perſons ought we to be, in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs!*

BEING

[a] *Wiſdom* xii. 12, 15.

BEING thus convinced of the Terrors of the Lord, we ought continually to perſuade Men: And may what I have now ſaid, make you always mindful *to fear him, who is able to deſtroy both Soul and Body in Hell.* SERM. XXXI.

SERMON XXXII.

DEATH a COMFORT to Good MEN.

1 COR. xv. 55.

O Death, where is thy Sting?

SERM. XXXII.

SAINT *Paul*, in this Chapter, having proved the Reſurrection of the Body, in Confutation of an Opinion, that ſome held in his Time, who judged it an impoſſible Thing for God himſelf to raiſe the Dead; and having ſhewn the happy Change that our Bodies, when raiſed again, were to undergo; that is, *That this Mortal was to put on Immortality, and this Corruption, Incorruption*, breaks out in a Kind of Ecſtacy upon this glorious Proſpect, and triumphs over Death and the Grave: *O Death, where is thy Sting?* What

is there, that is now terrible in thee? Nothing, that a wiſe, or a good Man need fear; for though thou canſt deſtroy this Body, that we now carry about us; though the Grave ſhall devour our Strength, and Corruption defile our Beauty; yet we ſhall not be under thy Power for ever. God will give us, hereafter, Bodies that thine Arrow cannot wound, nor the Bars of thy Gates confine. SERM. XXXII.

BUT, before I conſider *Death* as it concerns a *Chriſtian*, who hath ſo many *Arguments* from *Revelation* to convince him, that it will be a *Good*, and not an *Evil*, I will,

I. ENDEAVOUR to ſhew, that there is nothing in Death ſhocking to any reaſonable Man, that judgeth of himſelf and the World, as he ought to do.

I OWN, indeed, that there is nothing that Men ſo much dread, and have ſuch terrible Apprehenſions of, as Death; and yet, all Things conſidered, there is, perhaps, nothing that ſo little deſerves it.

FOR, if a Man reflects upon himſelf, and his Situation in this World; how

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many are the Miſeries that daily diſtreſs and grieve him? On the other Hand, how few are the Pleaſures that he enjoys? Theſe, when in his Poſſeſſion, give him but imperfect Delight; the other, real and ſubſtantial Miſery. And he is ſtill more unhappy, becauſe the lighteſt Sorrow more ſenſibly affects us, than the greateſt Pleaſures can give us Joy; which latter are not to be attained without ſome Pains and Labour; whereas the other come of their own accord, and, like unwelcome and impertinent Viſitors, are not eaſily to be diſmiſſed.

BUT this is not all: To the real Miſeries of human Life, are added many fantaſtical and imaginary Misfortunes, which are no leſs afflictive, nay, ſometimes more ſo, than real Evils; when we remember the boiſterous Waves we have paſt over, and anticipate thoſe which are to come, we continually increaſe our Sorrows, and multiply our Afflictions.

IN this View a wiſe Man regards himſelf. And, as to the World, he conſiders it as full of artful deſigning Men, who are guided by nothing but their Intereſt, and ſeldom do either a good or generous Action,

Action, but with a View of ſome Advantage to themſelves. SERM. XXXII.

Now, to a Man that thus judges of himſelf, and the World, the Thoughts of his Mortality can never be uneaſy. For though it withers and defaces all the Beauty and Glory of this World, and puts an End to what weak Minds call Pleaſure and Enjoyment; yet, it kindly ſuppreſſes all our Cares and Sorrows; it ſtills and huſhes the Clamours and Sighs of the Unfortunate; covers all Diſgrace, wipes away all Tears, and buries all Diſquiet and Diſcontent. Agreeably to this, *Job* tells us, in the Bitterneſs and Anguiſh of his Soul, that had he been dead, he had been at Reſt: For *there the Wicked ceaſe from Troubling, and there the Weary be at Reſt. There the Priſoners reſt together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor. The Small and Great are there, and the Servant is free from his Maſter*[a].

But further: What Complaints and Murmurings would have been uttered againſt Providence, and the Goodneſs of God, if it had been ſo ordained, that we

[a] *Job* iii. 17, 18, 19.

SERM. XXXII. were always to continue in this World? For though *Light be ſweet*, and though it *be a pleaſant Thing for the Eyes to behold the Sun*; yet, when Men are ſenſible, that Life is no Kindneſs to them, but ſerves only to prolong their Miſery, and multiply their Affliction, they are apt to expoſtulate, with *Job*, *Wherefore is Light given to him that is in Miſery, and Life unto the bitter in Soul? Which long for Death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid Treaſures? Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they find the Grave* [a]? But, were there no Poſſibility of a Retreat, no Hope of an End to their Calamities, they would cry out with the ſame *Job*, *My Soul chuſeth Strangling and Death, rather than my Life. I loath it, I would not live alway* [b]. Agreeably to which Words, how often do we hear Men wiſh ſincerely for Death, when they are tired out and broke down with the Weight and Preſſure of Afflictions? And, what a viſible Chearfulneſs and Satisfaction may we obſerve in their Countenances, at the delightful Proſpect of their Diſſolution? How fooliſh therefore is it, to dread

[a] *Job* iii. 20, 21, 22. [b] Chap. vii. 15, 16.

dread that very Thing, which, was it never to come to paſs, Men would wiſh for, with more Earneſtneſs than they now pray with, againſt it? No Condition being ſo miſerable as that, from which there is no Hope, or Poſſibility of being releaſed. SERM. XXXII.

But ſuppoſe he was not miſerable; a wiſe Man would not chuſe to live always in this World, when he conſiders, that there is nothing in it that can tempt him to make ſuch a Choice.

For, if he lives ever ſo long, he muſt, with *Solomon*, confeſs, *That there is no Thing new under the Sun*[a]. He only finds a dull Round of the ſame tireſome Pleaſures, and himſelf cloyed with a conſtant Repetition of them.

If he views the *natural World*, he finds the ſame regular Succeſſion of Things, the ſame Effects from the ſame Cauſes. Every Spring gives us the ſame Flowers; no new Vegetable appears to humour our Curioſity, or inquiſitive Temper. Each Summer, and Autumn, produceth the ſame Fruits, and each following Winter freezes and benumbs us, as the laſt. There is the ſame continual

[a] *Eccleſ.* i. 9.

SERM. XXXII. continual Revolution of Day and Night; the *Moon runneth her appointed Seaſons, and the Sun knoweth his going down.*

AND, as to the *ſocial World*, though there is great Pleaſure and Satisfaction in the Acquaintance, and Converſe with wiſe and good Men; yet this Happineſs is greatly over-balanced, by that perpetual Uneaſineſs that is felt from the baſe Deſigns, inſincere Profeſſions, or ſecret Malice of wicked Men.

FROM ſuch Reflections, a wiſe Man is not uneaſy at the Condition of human Life, but expects peaceably and calmly the Approach of his Diſſolution. He conſiders Death, as natural and inevitable; that Men are born into the World, to go out of it again: To fear, therefore, that which is ſo neceſſary, is to be an Enemy to himſelf; and, by tormenting and vexing his Soul with the Thoughts of what he cannot avoid, is to make him, by Anticipation, ſuffer every Moment, what one Moment will certainly put an End to.

BESIDES, by dying, he conſiders, that he does a Sort of Juſtice to thoſe, who are to ſucceed him. If paſt Generations had not

not given Place to the preſent, they would have had but a miſerable Welcome in this World; therefore, as their Departure afforded him Happineſs, he willingly, after he hath enjoyed his Share and Portion of Life, takes his Leave, to make Room for others. SERM. XXXII.

But further: He conſiders, that there are ſome Things, which a Man ought to prefer to Life itſelf; but a Man that is afraid to die, can never do any Thing great or noble. It is a Contempt of Death alone, that is the Source of almoſt all generous Exploits, of moſt brave and reſolute Actions; and therefore he freely runs all Hazards, when, by ſo doing, he may give a Luſtre to his other Actions, and perform at the ſame Time ſomething beneficial to the World.

But from theſe Arguments that I have made uſe of, I would not have you imagine, that I am recommending ſuch an *Inſenſibility* or *Indifference* about it, as to perſuade you never to think on it at all; or to expoſe, or throw away Life in a peeviſh Humour, or fretful Diſcontent.

For,

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FOR, never to think on Death is unbecoming a wiſe and prudent Man; and to throw away Life in a Diſguſt, or through Deſpair, is the greateſt Ingratitude to the Almighty Giver of it, and is indeed wicked beyond Compariſon; and, after all, an Act of the greateſt Cowardice, and Want of Spirit: For true Courage conſiſts in bearing up bravely againſt all Aſſaults and Oppoſition, in ſurmounting all Difficulties, and overcoming all Calamities and Afflictions.

EXCEPT therefore in theſe two Caſes, a wiſe Man ought to be above the Fear of Death; and it is the Part of a wiſe Man to be ſo.

II. IF we conſider Death, as *Chriſtians*, every Argument, that we have already made uſe of, will have ſtill a greater Force. For,

IF the Afflictions that attend human Life, make a wiſe Man deſire to die, ſince to live is rather a Burden than a Bleſſing; how agreeable muſt the Proſpect of Death be to a good Chriſtian, who conſiders it not only as a Retreat from his Sorrows, but a Step to another and better World?

AND

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And if a *wise Man* would not chuse to live always in this World, on a Supposition only, that he was abated his Share of the Miseries of Life, upon Consideration, that even the Pleasures of this World are not worthy such a Choice; how much less should *a Christian* desire it, when he must, by that, be deprived of Pleasures, infinitely more desirable, and such as are not possible for him to enjoy here; nay, such as he is not capable of enjoying, while he is encumbered with the Infirmities of Flesh and Blood? To such an one Death, surely, can never be unwelcome, who is certain to be so great a Gainer by it. The Distresses and Calamities of human Life must but slightly concern him, whose Expectation is well grounded, and whose Hope is full of Immortality. The Loss of the most endearing Things here, must be easily surpassed, when he considers, that he himself must, in a little Time, depart likewise, and leave them, if they had not left him.

The Loss of *Friends*, *Parents*, or *Children*, are great Afflictions; we cannot, without much Grief and deep Concern, part with them; yet, what an Alleviation is it

to

SERM. XXXII. to our Sorrow, to be ſure that they are gone into ſuch a Place, where they would not deſire this Life again? Nay, if they had it in their Power to reaſſume it, would never exerciſe that Power to return back. The happy Change that Death hath wrought in them, will rather make them pity our Condition, who are left behind; and lament the Weakneſs of thoſe, who are ſo attached to this World.

WHEN we reflect upon the great Privileges and Bleſſings, we ſhall enjoy in a future State, both in our *Bodies* and *Souls*, it will naturally wean us from our over Fondneſs of our preſent Enjoyments.

As to our *Bodies:* St. *Paul* tell us, that *this Corruption ſhall put on Incorruption*; that all thoſe Diſtempers and Infirmities, that now diſorder and torment our Bodies, and from which no Degrees of Men can plead an Exemption, ſhall then be removed from us: Every Seed and Principle of Corruption will be deſtroyed, and Sickneſs and Pain ſhall be no more.

AND not only ſo; but our Bodies ſhall be immortal, as well as incorruptible: For, as *Corruption ſhall put on Incorruption*, ſo

this Mortal ſhall put on Immortality. Now, after ſuch Aſſurances, what Reaſon can we have to complain, that we aret o lay aſide a poor diſeaſed and mortal Body, when we are certain, that it ſhall be raiſed again, and Immortality and Incorruption be beſtowed upon it? SERM. XXXII.

As to our *Souls:* The Change that will be wrought in them, will be anſwerable in Degree to the Alteration, that our Bodies ſhall undergo. All our inadequate Ideas will be made perfect; and all that Learning, with which Men are now ſo elevated, will become uſeleſs; and Languages, which are at preſent the Channels of it, ceaſe to be, as St. *Paul* obſerves: *Whether there be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be Knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away.* For of what Uſe can Languages be, where, perhaps, there will be nothing but the Harmony of the Soul, or where all may ſpeak but one and the ſelf-ſame Tongue? And how ſhall our Knowledge laſt, when the very Things themſelves, which were the Objects of it, ſhall be done away?

THOSE Difficulties, which are now ſeemingly inſurmountable, ſhall be all cleared up; and

SERM. XXXII. and thoſe Acts of divine Providence explained, which have ſet at nought the greateſt Wits and Artiſts to account for. Thoſe Diſpenſations alſo, which ſeem now to call in queſtion the Government of God over the World, or his Goodneſs and Juſtice in ſuffering thoſe Events, will then be found, not only the Produce of infinite Wiſdom, but we ſhall applaud his Goodneſs and Juſtice in permitting them to have been.

AGAIN: If converſing with wiſe and good Men is a Satisfaction, we would deſire and willingly enjoy; what a tranſporting, what an inconceivable Entertainment muſt it be, to converſe with Saints and Angels, and juſt Spirits made perfect; and hear them reaſon, reveal and explain, what our Ears never heard, and what never entered into our Hearts to conceive! If the Queen of *Sheba*, upon ſeeing the Glories of *Solomon*, and hearing his Wiſdom, confeſſed that it exceeded her Expectations; how much more will the Glories of Heaven exceed all we can poſſibly imagine of them? And with what Ecſtaſy and Rapture ſhall we acknowledge, that not only a greater

greater, but a wiſer and far more tranſcendent than *Solomon* is there? SERM. XXXII.

Is not this enough to cure us of our inſipid Fondneſs for this Life, and make us no longer uneaſy at the Approach of Death, which, inſtead of cloſing, really opens our Eyes, and enlarges our Proſpect, and preſents us with a new and more glorious World; and which, inſtead of debaſing the *Powers of the Soul*, improves the *intellectual Faculties*, and reſcues the Mind from Error, Prejudice and Deluſion? *For now*, as St. *Paul* ſays, *we know in Part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in Part ſhall be done away.*

BUT further: A Chriſtian doth not only deſire to be diſſolved upon Account of that future Happineſs, which is laid up for him in the Heavens; but a Senſe of the ſpiritual Dangers, to which he is continually expoſed, makes him pleaſed to be delivered from them.

IT is a great Concern to good Men, that their Infirmities will not ſuffer them to live as virtuouſly as they could wiſh; that they are ſo liable to Errors and Miſtakes, and

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to be hurried away by unforeſeen and unexpected Temptations: And therefore, being ſenſible of the Weakneſs and Frailty of human Nature, the Unfaithfulneſs of their firmeſt Reſolutions, and how unworthy their beſt Performances of Obedience are of any Reward, they look upon Death as a Friend, that is going to do them the moſt ſignal Piece of Service, that is, to remove them from the Contagion of a wicked World, and from the evil Conſequences of their own Depravity.

FOR ſuch Reaſons, Death is always welcome to a *good Chriſtian*; and that it may equally be ſo to us, let us always live in ſuch a Courſe, that we may have Hope and Confidence towards God: For they only, who by their Actions have endeavoured to be like him, ſhall live with him in Glory; they only ſhall taſte of cœleſtial Happineſs, who, by patient Continuance in well-doing, have always kept themſelves in Readineſs, waiting for the Lord, with their *Loins girded about*, and their *Lamps burning*; *that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately.*

It is the happy Condition of good Men only, when they come to die, to be able to look towards another World, without Terror and Confusion: And what wise Man would not live the Life of the Righteous, that his latter End might be like his; who, in the Agonies of Death, can triumph over it, and leave this World with the joyful Presages of eternal Peace? SERM. XXXII.

Which that we all may do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XXXIII.

On the NATURE of SIN.

PART I.

ROM. vi. 12.

Let not Sin reign in your mortal Body, that ye ſhould obey it in the Luſts thereof.

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IN diſcourſing upon this Exhortation of the Apoſtle, I ſhall conſider the heinous *Nature* of *Sin*, with all the miſerable *Fruits* that are produced from it; that from a right Underſtanding of its Malignity, we may be the more careful to avoid the Guilt of it, and prevent that Ruin, which is the certain Conſequence of its Embraces.

THE Nature of Sin may be thus defined; namely, An unreaſonable Gratification of a Man's Paſſions and Appetites, in Oppo-

Oppoſition to ſome known *Law*: Agreeably to which a Man may become a Sinner *three Ways*. SERM. XXXIII.

1*ſt*, BY violating ſome *Dictate of Reaſon*; which is called the *Law of Nature*.

2*dly*, BY contradicting ſome poſitive *Law* of *God*; which is called *Revelation*.

3*dly*, BY oppoſing the Commands, which Society have inſtituted; which is called *human Law*.

BUT though this be true, yet to render any Action that we commit truly criminal, it is neceſſary that it be done in Contradiction to ſome *known Law*, or what might have been known by us; otherwiſe, the Violator of it cannot truly be ſaid to be culpable, ſo as to deſerve any Puniſhment.

THIS is allowed by all Men, as moſt reaſonable: And Almighty God, who is the Governour of the World, and who expects nothing of his Creatures, but what is juſt and right, hath taken Care, that his Laws ſhould be divulged, ſo that Men might have no Excuſe, when they violate his Commands.

.MRES XXXIII. IN the Promulgation of the *Jewiſh Law*, God made uſe of the Miniſtry of Angels.

IN the Delivery of the Goſpel, the Miracles that our Bleſſed Saviour every Day performed, were undeniable Proofs of God's Will, and of the Covenant he made with Men.

AND as to the *Law of Nature*, this God hath implanted in all our Hearts, in moſt legible Characters, which every one may read, that hath not debauched his Reaſon and Underſtanding.

BUT where God did not thus univerſally divulge his Will, there he did not expect an Obedience to it. Of this we have an Inſtance in the *Jewiſh Law*, which not being deſigned as a Rule to all Nations, God did not exact, of any other People, a Conformity to thoſe Inſtitutions; but, as the Apoſtle ſays, *ſuch as ſinned without Law, ſhall periſh without Law; and as many as have ſinned in the Law, ſhall be judged by the Law* [a].

NAY, even the Goſpel itſelf, which was deſigned to be the Religion of all Nations, till it was fully publiſhed, makes a favourable

[a] *Rom.* ii. 12.

able Interpretation of Mens Unbelief; and this, with great Reaſon and Juſtice; for the Prejudices of Education are very ſtrong, and it requires more than common Reſolution to break through them, particularly in Regard to Religion: And upon this Account it was, that St. *Paul* tells us, he obtained Mercy, becauſe he oppoſed the Doctrine of Chriſt *ignorantly, in Unbelief* [a]. SERM. XXXIII.

BUT to render Sin compleatly criminal, it muſt be *voluntary*, as well as done in Oppoſition to ſome *known Law*. For what we are compelled to do by the Force of any violent Impreſſion, which was not in our Power to reſiſt, is not properly a ſinful Act, and therefore cannot involve us in the Guilt of Sin. For it is the Will alone, that conſtitutes that: Otherwiſe, what Account can be given, why God ſhould uſe ſuch Exhortations and Perſuaſions, ſuch Reproofs and Expoſtulations with Men for Sin, if it were not in their Power to withſtand it? Wherefore ſhould he upbraid them for their Wilfulneſs, condemn them for their Stubbornneſs, and after all ſeverely puniſh them, for what they could not help? If

[a] 1 *Tim.* i. 13.

SERM. XXXIII. the insupportable Weight of Necessity lies upon them, or some latent or irresistible Cause overpowers them, they are Patients rather than Agents, and deserve Pity rather than Punishment.

BESIDES, it is not possible, that any Man should repent of doing what he could not but do; for what Remorse, or Shame, or Trouble of Conscience can there be, when he did what was necessary for him to do? God, indeed, hath set up Conscience as his Vicegerent, and a Judge within us; but it is not so absolute as to judge without a Law, nor so unjust as to condemn or torture, without Conviction of Guilt. And though God by his Power may impose what Laws he pleases, yet we have the Security of his Goodness, Wisdom, and Justice, that he will not oppress us, but, in all his Dispensations, consider our Frame and Circumstances.

FROM this Definition of Sin, it is plain, that Guilt is not an arbitrary Stamp that God sets upon Actions, nor Punishment an Effect of Harshness or Severity. For, as all that, which God punishes as such, is a Contradiction to his Will, and to that Order

der of Things he hath conſtituted in the World; and is alſo a Contempt of the Divine Wiſdom, in that the Sinner either turns his Back upon the Laws of God, by affected Ignorance, or becomes lawleſs, and confronts Almighty God; there is alſo a Contumacy in it too, for whereas it hath pleaſed God to endow Men with Freedom, to the Intent that they might ſerve him more honourably, they, in ſinning, perverſely turn this Privilege againſt their Maker. SERM. XXXIII.

AND though Sin admits of many Heads of Abatement, or Aggravation, according to the Law it violates, or from the Clearneſs, or Dimneſs of the Light, under which Men ſin, or the Greatneſs, or Smallneſs of the Temptation; yet, the moſt uſeful Diſtinction is taken from the Conſent of the Will, in the Commiſſion of it. And Scripture and Conſcience reckon the Degrees of Guilt, in Proportion to the Fulneſs of Conſent, that the Will gave to any vicious Action.

WHEN there is but an imperfect Compliance of the Will, it is called a Sin of *Infirmity*: But when it runs greedily into

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the Commiſſion of it, it is ſtiled *preſumptuous*. But to be more particular.

SINS of *Infirmity* are, when a Man enters unadviſedly the Confines of Sins, but withdraws himſelf as ſoon as he conſiders the Conſequents, and the Dangers of it: Or, when, by the Warmth of his Paſſions, he begins to take Fire; or when the Greatneſs of the Temptation ſurprizes him, before he can recollect himſelf, and call in the Aid of his Reaſon and Religion, to ſupport him. Now, ſuch as theſe are not deliberate Sins, becauſe the full Conſent of the Will is not given; and are properly *Sins of Infirmity*.

BUT when a Man is not ſurprized by any ſudden Temptation, but goes calmly and deliberately into the Commiſſion of Sin, then it becomes highly aggravated and preſumptuous: Yet, for all this, there are ſome Men, that think, when they are about to commit any great Sin, if they find ſome Reluctance or Abhorrence in their Minds, that that Sin will be reckoned as a *Sin of Infirmity*, becauſe of the Conflicts they found in themſelves: But ſuch Men would do well to conſider, that however they may call

call ſuch a Reluctance, by the ſpecious Name of the Combat between the Fleſh and the Spirit, it is certainly nothing elſe, but ſome Remains of natural Conſcience, which is to be found in all, except the moſt Profligate and Abandoned. But when, for all the Checks of his Conſcience, a Man goes on, and commits the Sin, though it cannot be ſaid that his Conſcience is ſeared, yet he is in a very fair Way of having it ſo: For, being often ſtifled in its Intimations, and overborn by the Fury of Luſt and Paſſion, it will grow dead and ſtupid. SERM. XXXIII.

AND, beſides, it is ſo far from extenuating the Guilt of a Man's Sin, that his Heart was againſt his committing it, that it is rather an Aggravation of his Preſumption, that he went on to commit it, when his Heart condemned it.

THUS much concerning the Guilt of Sin in general. I come next to conſider the various States of Sinners. Of which,

THE *firſt* are thoſe, that live in the Practice of great and enormous Sins.

THE *ſecond* Sort are ſuch, as, though they live not in the Habit, yet are guilty of the Act

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Act of ſome very great and flagitious Crime, which being of ſo deadly a Nature, every Man, that hath any Senſe of Virtue, or any Care of his own Soul, ought always to be guarded againſt it; and he that can be ſo careleſs as to be found guilty of any ſuch, betrays the great Atheiſm and Security of his Heart.

THE *third* Sort are thoſe, who, though they avoid both the Habit and Commiſſion of greater Sins, yet allow themſelves in the frequent Commiſſion of leſſer, and perſevere in them without Repentance. Now, ſuch Kinds of Sin are the more dangerous, becauſe our Conſciences not being preſently ſtartled at them, as at greater Crimes, they ſteal the more inſenſibly upon us; from whence it happens, that they become more frequent, and ſo amount to a larger Number: And beſides, though theſe may paſs for Inadvertencies, when they are rarely committed, yet it muſt be by a vicious Neglect of ourſelves, when they are frequent, becauſe every virtuous Man is awakened to greater Diligence by his Miſtakes; knowing that the leaſt Sin, if not repented of, when come to our Knowledge, be-

becomes a voluntary Tranſgreſſion, which increaſes its Guilt. SERM. XXXIII.

THESE are the ſeveral Ways, by which Men are denominated Sinners in Scripture.

THE next Thing I ſhall conſider, are the Steps, by which Men are led into the Commiſſion of it.

THE firſt Step, by which Men are led into the Commiſſion of Sin, is *Pride*.

WHEN *Pride* once gets Poſſeſſion of a Man, his Underſtanding is intoxicated, his Mind giddy and inconſtant, and incapable of hearing any Thing but what flatters and ſoothes its Vanity: It puts Men upon doing Things diſhonourable and raſh; it hinders them from taking a true Eſtimate of themſelves, and makes them form too great an Opinion of their own Abilities.

BEING thus puffed up with a falſe Conceit of himſelf, the proud Man becomes reſtleſs in his Condition, repines at the Providence of God, as if he had placed him in a Condition beneath his Worth, or envied his Happineſs and Satisfaction, by putting him under unneceſſary Reſtraints. From whence he is puſhed on to be his

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own Director, and to allow himſelf in the Practice of thoſe Things, which God hath forbidden. This is the immediate Conſequence of *Pride*, and the Beginning of all Rebellion againſt God.

IT is a common Opinion, that it was *Pride*, that was the Occaſion of the Fall of the apoſtate Angels; and in Alluſion to this, the Prophet *Iſaiah* deſcribes the Deſtruction of the King of *Babylon*: *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! For thou haſt ſaid in thy Heart, I will aſcend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God, I will be like the Moſt High*, &c[a].

BUT, undoubtedly, this was the Ruin of our firſt Parents, who, by a vain Deſire of being like God, by knowing Good and Evil, deprived themſelves of Immortality and Happineſs. And as *Pride* was the Cauſe of their Diſobedience, ſo it is alſo the firſt Spring of the Diſobedience of the Generality of Mankind.

FOR, though the immediate Motives to ſome Sins may be Profit or Pleaſure, yet that which ſets us to work, is a conceited Opi-

[a] *Iſaiah* xiv. 12, &c.

Opinion of our own Worth or Wiſdom, which derogates from the Divine Wiſdom or Juſtice in the Frame of his Laws, and Methods of his Providence; as if he had not conſulted ſo well the Conveniency of our Natures, but that we could provide better for ourſelves than he hath done, if we were to carve for ourſelves. From whence proceeds an Impatience of his Government, and an Inclination to rebel. SERM. XXXIII.

AND as *Pride* was the Cauſe of Man's Ruin at firſt, and continued to do the ſame Miſchief as it begun; therefore, our Bleſſed Saviour, when he came into the World, recommended a profound Humility, as the moſt ſovereign Antidote againſt Sin, and the *only Principle* of Stability in Virtue; and enjoined, that, in Lowlineſs of Mind, they would ſubmit their own Reaſonings to the Wiſdom of God, and by Faith depend upon him. Which Virtue of Humility, were it honeſtly practiſed, would make us receive what he hath taught us, without Diſpute or Diffidence, and ſecure us againſt all Apoſtaſy from Religion, and Rebellion againſt God. For,

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THE next Step to *Pride*, is the Sinner's caſting off the Senſe of God and his Providence, and laying aſide the Duties of Divine Worſhip; who *ſay to the Almighty, Depart from us, we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways.* For,

As the Senſe of God is the great Comfort of good Men in their Trouble, their Support in doing their Duty, and their Preſervation from the Temptations that aſſault them; ſo it is the Dread and Terror of the Wicked, who, as they cannot hinder the all-ſeeing Eye of God, from obſerving them, are forced, for their own Quiet, to be ſo abſurd as to cheat themſelves, by turning away their Eyes from him.

THUS, when *Adam* had tranſgreſſed God's Command, he hid himſelf from the Preſence of the Lord: For, not only the Majeſty and Power of God ſtrike a Terror to a guilty Conſcience, but the very Contemplation of the Divine Purity, ſhames and reproaches it. But,

As in a ſtrict Senſe, we can neither approach nor depart from the infinite Majeſty of God; therefore, when wicked Men are ſaid to depart from God, it is to be underſtood,

ſtood, that they have caſt off the Yoke of his Obedience, live without any Senſe of his Providence, or have laid aſide the Care of his Worſhip. For, SERM. XXXIII.

As whoſoever lives under a Senſe of God's Providence, will endeavour to propitiate the Divine Majeſty to himſelf, by all Worſhip, and dutiful Obſervance; ſo he that lives wickedly, will in Time loſe all Senſe of a Providence, and conſequently, all Conſcience of the Duties of Worſhip, and will not fail to run riot in his Life, when he hath rid himſelf of thoſe awful Principles, that curbed and reſtrained him. All which is plain from common Experience; for what is it, that encourages any Man in a generous Undertaking, where the Exerciſe of Virtue is attended with Hazard and Difficulty, with Labour and Trouble, with Patience and Self-Denial, but the Belief of a Providence? What bears him up, that the Privacy of the Fact abates not his Edge, nor the Tedioufneſs of Accompliſhment, wearies out his Endeavours, but only this, that he *ſees him that is inviſible*, and having God before him, is ſure of Succeſs and Reward? And is there any

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Thing, that keeps alive this Senſe of God and Providence, that neither wicked Suggeſtions debauch his Principles, nor the Multitude of ill Examples cool his Heat, and corrupt his Reſolution, but his Approaches to God, by Exerciſes of Devotion, whereby he refreſhes the worthy Notions of his Mind, and hath them, as it were, new engraven on his Heart? Such a Man as this is aſhamed of Sin, and diſdains every ungenerous Action, and cannot, without great Violence to himſelf, condeſcend to entertain the Devil in his Boſom.

ON the other Hand, take a Man that lives without a Senſe of God, and you will find, he hath no Care or Value for himſelf; he hath not a Mind large enough for any generous Deſign, he is poor ſpirited, hurried by every Fear, baffled by every Danger, ſurprized and carried away by every Temptation. The vigorous Notions of God are either extinct by the Prophaneneſs of his Life, or languiſh by the Neglect of religious Duties; there is no Guardian Angel about his Soul, no generous Diſdain of Sin at his Heart; he

hath neither the Aſſiſtance of God, nor the Strength of a Man. SERM. XXXIII.

FROM all which it is evident, that the caſting off of God and his Providence, is the ready Way to all Sin and Folly: For, as *Pride* and *Self-Conceit* make our Souls rebel againſt God, ſo they who neglect their Duty to him, ſuffer it to grow to a dangerous Head: For, as *Pride* was the *firſt* Step towards a wicked Courſe, this is the *ſecond*.

LET me, therefore, by Way of Inference, intreat you to beware of that *Pride*, that will render you incapable of religious Improvements; that will cauſe you to take Offence at the Plainneſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel, and thereby hinder you from having due Impreſſions made upon you by it. A conceited Opinion of our own Underſtanding will run us into many Dangers; and it is from a ſtrange Affectation of being wiſer than other Men, that ſo many have run themſelves into *Irreligion* and *Atheiſm*. But let us follow the good Advice of *Solomon*: *Truſt in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not unto thine own Underſtanding: In all thy Ways acknowledge*

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him, and he ſhall direct thy Paths: Be not wiſe in thine own Eyes: Fear the Lord and depart from Evil; remembering withal, that *them that are meek, will God guide in Judgment; and ſuch as are gentle, them will he learn his Way.* For Humility is the only Means to entitle us to the Divine Aſſiſtance and Direction: And *the greater thou art*, (ſays the Son of *Sirach*) *humble thyſelf the more, and thou ſhalt find Favour before the Lord: Men are in high Places and of Renown, but Myſteries are revealed unto the Meek.*

Laſtly, LET us always live in a due Senſe of God and his Providence, remembering, that *they that forſake the Lord, ſhall periſh.* Whatſoever Pretences ſome Men make to Demonſtration, on the Side of Infidelity, I believe, no one ever undertook to prove it, till he found it neceſſary, for his own Quiet, to endeavour it. They firſt become wicked Men, and then, to huſh the Clamours of their own Conſcience, diſpute and cheat themſelves into Infidelity. Unhappy Men! whereas would they but do his Will, they would know of the Doc-

trine, whether it be of God, or of Men: For the Charms of the Practice of Piety and Morality are ſo great, and give ſuch Satisfaction to the Mind, that they muſt be convinced, that that Religion muſt be of God, that ſo evidently tends to make his Creatures happy. SERM. XXXIII.

LET every one, therefore, endeavour to act ſo, that he may believe with Comfort in his Maker, and dread nothing ſo much as to diſoblige him by his perverſe and undutiful Behaviour. To think that we may withdraw ourſelves from his Preſence, is a vain and fooliſh Attempt; for God is in all Places, and nothing can ſcreen us from his Power. He obſerves all our Actions, and knows our moſt ſecret Thoughts: A Conſideration, that ſhould teach us to behave ourſelves as always under his Eye, and in the Preſence of our Judge, who *will bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the Counſels of the Heart.*

AND as his Knowledge is infinite, ſo is his Power, which is always employed in the Protection of his Servants, and ought always to be relied upon by them. Thus

SERM. XXXIII. the Pſalmiſt ſays, *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very preſent Help in Trouble: Therefore will we not fear, tho' the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carried into the Midſt of the Sea.*

AN Encouragement this, ſufficient to ſupport good Men; as it ought to be a Terror to the Wicked, when they conſider, that there is no poſſible Way to eſcape the Juſtice and Vengeance of Omnipreſent Anger: For *there is no Darkneſs, nor Shadow of Death, where the Workers of Wickedneſs may hide themſelves.*

SER-

SERMON XXXIV.

On the NATURE of SIN.

PART II.

ROM. vi. 12.

Let not Sin reign in your mortal Body, that ye ſhould obey it in the Luſts thereof.

HAVING already defined the Nature of Sin, and obſerved ſome of the Steps that Men take, upon their entering upon a wiçked Courſe of Life, I proceed, in the next Place, to conſider the Deſtruction, Sin makes in the Powers of the Soul, and the Ruin it cauſes on the Talents and Abilities, God hath endowed Man with. SERM. XXXIV.

FOR the better underſtanding of which, I will conſider,

I. WHAT is that which God gives to Man.

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II. IN what Manner Vice deſtroys it.

I. I WILL conſider, what it is that God gives to Man. Which may be compriſed under theſe four Things:

1. A Power of chuſing for ourſelves; which is called Freedom.

2. Reaſon, or Conſcience.

3. A Senſe of God's Providence.

4. Divine Illumination.

1. GOD hath given to Man a Power of chuſing for himſelf, which is called Freedom: For the Proof of which, we need only reflect upon our own ſelves, and we ſhall perceive, that God hath not bound us with the rigid Chains of Neceſſity, by which we are forcibly over-ruled and determined to one Thing; but he hath put us in a Capacity of making our own Choice, that we might be capable of Rewards and Puniſhments; and that, as nothing ſhould make us miſerable, without our own Conſent, ſo we might have the Comfort of being aſſiſting to our own Happineſs.

THAT this is a great Perfection of human Nature, muſt be evident to every one, who conſiders, that by this, Man is made Maſter of himſelf and his own Actions, and

and can make his own Choice, in Spite of all the Temptations that aſſault him. SERM. XXXIV.

AND that Man was created free, is plain, upon this Reaſoning; for as we are ſure that God made all Things for their proper Ends, it muſt be certain that he created Man, who is the moſt excellent Piece of his Workmanſhip, with Powers ſufficient to attain his own Happineſs: At leaſt, it cannot be imagined, that God would make ſuch a Creature, as ſhould be only able to croſs and act contrary to himſelf, and not to comply with him; as it muſt be true, if Man had not originally a Power of chuſing Good as well as Evil. And were it not for this, we ſhould be unable to give an Account how Sin came into the World, or vindicate Providence in joining a mortal Body to an immortal Soul. But if Man was made free, all this Difficulty is at an End; and that he was made free, is acknowledged by moſt.

2. THE next Thing that God hath given to Man, is *Reaſon* and *Conſcience*. By the former of which, Man having, as it were, a Standard within himſelf of Good and Evil, he may guide himſelf in the Choice

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Choice of his Actions; and by the latter, he is able to compare his Actions with this Law of Reaſon in his own Mind, and ſo paſs Judgment upon himſelf. And indeed, it was neceſſary, as Man was a free Being, that God ſhould give him a Principle of Reaſon to reſtrain that Liberty, that he might ſteer his Courſe agreeably to thoſe Ends God deſigned him for. And had not God put upon him this Bias of Reaſon, to incline him the right Way, he might have made ſuch an exorbitant Uſe of his Freedom, as to have given the World more Diſturbance than he hath done.

How great a Bleſſing Reaſon is, may appear from this, that by it we have a Taſte and Reliſh of Truth and Falſhood, of Good and Evil.

3. THE third Thing God hath given us, is, a Senſe of his Providence, obſervable in his wiſe Government of the World, in not ſuffering the Afflictions and Adverſities of Life to throw his Creatures into Deſpair; nor letting a conſtant Series of Proſperity, make them forget from whom they receive their Bleſſings; but from a friendly Intermixture of Mercies and Afflictions, to let them

them ſee, not only his Providence in general, but his Approbation of Virtue in the one, and his Diſpleaſure againſt Sin in the other. SERM. XXXIV.

4. THE fourth Thing that God hath beſtowed upon Man, are thoſe Intimations, which he hath been pleaſed to give, to enable him the better to underſtand his Duty, and purſue his Happineſs.

As for us Chriſtians, who live under the Light of Revelation, who are preſſed with the Motives of eternal Rewards and Puniſhments, and are under the Operations of God's Holy Spirit, this muſt be acknowledged as a peculiar Favour; and yet even ſeveral of the virtuouſly diſpoſed Heathens, have received great Benefit, by thoſe Oracles of Divine Wiſdom, as may be diſcovered in their moral Diſcourſes, which were wrote ſince Chriſt came into the World.

BESIDES, it is not probable, that ſo good and merciful a Being, as God is, ſhould ſo far neglect ſo great a Part of the World, as the *Heathen* was, as to afford them no Intimations of his Mind, towards bettering of their Reaſonings in thoſe Matters of Importance,

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portance, which he principally created them for. On the contrary, it ſeems moſt reaſonable to believe, that there never was a Man, that had not ſome Kind of Aſſiſtance from his Maker, till he rendered himſelf unworthy of it. Which leads me,

II. To ſhew, in what Manner Mens Wickedneſs deſtroys theſe Talents, God hath beſtowed upon us.

1. THAT Freedom, which God hath given to Man, is evidently deſtroyed by Mens Wickedneſs. For, as the Facility of doing any Thing, is learned by frequent and repeated Acts; and as, the more virtuous Actions a Man doth, the more prone he is to do ſo again; ſo every vicious Action, which a Man commits, begets a Propenſion and Inclination to others of the ſame Kind. When a Man hath uſed himſelf to ſubdue his Paſſions to his Reaſon, they eaſily are managed; but he that hath accuſtomed them to their full Scope, will find them rage, and not eaſily brought into Order; and this will be true, though thoſe two Men were ſuppoſed to have equally violent Paſſions. Cuſtom we call a ſecond Nature,

Nature, but it hath the Power to ſupplant the firſt and original Nature, putting new Propenſions as another Bias upon the Spirit. By this we ſee how Vice deſtroys that natural Freedom, that God beſtowed upon us. SERM. XXXIV.

2. So alſo does it deſtroy our Reaſon and Conſcience; for, nothing is more plain, than, that vicious Practices blind the Eyes of the Mind; partly, as the Steams of Luſt and Paſſion ſend up a Cloud, which dull the Soul; partly, alſo, as Luxury brings a Slothfulneſs upon the Spirits of Men, that they chuſe rather to bury their Talent than improve it; but principally, as all Wickedneſs prejudices Men againſt Truth, making it become their Intereſt to ſhut their Eyes, leſt they ſhould behold their Shame, or render the Proſecution of that more uncomfortable to them, from which they are reſolved not to deſiſt.

3. The Teſtimony alſo, which God in his Providence uſually gives to Virtue, and his Diſcountenance to Vice, wicked Men either atheiſtically impute to blind Chance, or elſe turn the Arguments God affords them of *Gratitude*, into *Grounds of Security*,

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rity, or *his fatherly Chaſtiſements* into *Occaſion of Sullenneſs and Deſpair.*

4. BUT if it pleaſe God to do ſomething extraordinary, and awaken them, by a peculiar Addreſs to them, they oppoſe the Light, which would reproach their Practice, and diſturb their Security. Thus far does Mens Wickedneſs deſtroy all the Powers of the Soul; which being once compleated, they immediately become the Slaves of the Devil; for, when Men have ſotted themſelves with Senſuality, are puffed up with Pride and Malice, or, by ſome vicious Habit or other, have loſt the Command of themſelves, and the Protection of God, they fall readily into the Devil's *Snare*, and *are taken captive by him at his Will* [a].

To what Employment he puts his Servants, is not difficult to imagine. Sin is the greateſt Slavery in the World, it debaſes Man's Nature to the vileſt Condition; breaks and ſinks his Spirits, ſo that they have not the Courage to reſcue themſelves from the Dominion of it. Every Luſt that we entertain, not only robs us of ourſelves, but binds us ſo faſt, that we are not able to break

[a] 2 *Tim.* ii. 26.

break looſe. This is the Condition of the Devil's Service, in reſpect of which the moſt difficult Parts of God's Service are eaſy and pleaſant. But this is not all: SERM. XXXIV.

SIN is not only the vileſt Drudgery, but all the Pleaſures it propoſes, are unſatisfactory.

To make this more evident, it will be neceſſary to take a View of thoſe Advantages, which are ſaid to ariſe from the Practice of it; to wit, *Pleaſure*, *Profit*, and *Glory*.

1. THE *Pleaſure* here to be underſtood, are thoſe ſenſual Enjoyments of the Debauchee, which certainly diſappoint thoſe, who propoſe to be happy in them; who, after all their Eagerneſs in the Purſuit, find themſelves deceived, and obliged to hunt after Variety, to weary themſelves in going from one Pleaſure to another, in Hopes of finding that Satisfaction, which is never to be had: And the Reaſon is, that, were they lawful, they are not ſufficient to ſatisfy the Mind of Man, which is of too great a Capacity to be filled with ſuch Traſh. It is only intellectual Pleaſure, the Contents of true Wiſdom, the Peace of a good Conſcience,

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science, and the Reflections upon having done some Good, that give a Man real and solid Delight.

2. As to the *Profit*, which the Sinner proposes to himself, that will be very inconsiderable, if Accounts be justly balanced. For those Sins, that are most agreeable, are the most expensive; and as for Injustice, Covetousness, and Oppression, which are thought to bring Men in some Advantage and Profit, they are commonly attended with Uneasiness, followed by such Guilt, and branded with so much Infamy, that, upon a just Stating of the Account, they will find themselves Debtors to their own Happiness, even in this World; without taking in this Consideration, that were they thus to gain the whole World, they would make but a bad Bargain; for what is the Gain of a World, that we must soon leave, to the Loss of eternal Salvation?

3. As to *Glory*, this is not usually the Attendant of Sin, whose Companions are Shame and Infamy.

BUT, if there be some Sins, that carry Applause with them, they receive it only from those, that are Partakers in the Guilt.

But

But take worldly Honour at the beſt, what can be made of it? There is nothing in it, that can ſatisfy the Mind. SERM. XXXIV.

As for ſenſual *Pleaſure*, we are ſoon tired of it, and loſe the Reliſh of ſuch Things, as were once moſt grateful to the Mind. The moſt delicate Fare is nothing to him that hath no Palate, nor the moſt raviſhing Muſick, to him that hath no Ear. The Senſes themſelves will ſoon decay, and then thoſe Entertainments, which were before agreeable, will not only become inſipid, but irkſome.

THEN, as for *Profit* and the *Gain* of this World; though it be commonly to be obſerved, that they are moſt earneſt in accumulating Riches, who are by the Courſe of Nature near their Journey's End; yet, *this their Way is their Folly*. For, they ſhall leave what they now have, to they know not whom; and whilſt another is enjoying their Poſſeſſions, they ſhall not have the Pleaſure of beholding them with their Eyes: For the Grave ſhall ſhut them in, and cauſe them to take an *everlaſting Adieu* of all that was pleaſant to them here.

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BUT, if we ſuppoſe them on this Side the Grave, what Advantage are theſe Things to them? They cannot ſtave off a Diſtemper, or bribe Death to put off his Approach for a Moment: Inſtead of that, it is well if they do not call to Remembrance the unjuſt Ways, by which they heaped them together, and embitter all the Pleaſure, they imagined to receive by them; and at laſt, inſtead of preparing them for the Hour of Death, be the Means of their everlaſting Deſtruction.

Laſtly, As for *Glory*; if it be not all Fancy and Conceit, it is certain it cannot give any Satisfaction to a languiſhing Spirit. When a Man feels Remorſe for his former Sins, what will it avail him, that he hath gotten a Reputation among Men; and that, whilſt he is applauded by them, who cannot ſee into his Heart, he is condemned by his own Conſcience, and by God, who is greater than his Conſcience, and knoweth all Things?

FROM a Conſideration of what hath been ſaid, it is evident, that the Sinner, who is reſolved to continue ſuch, cannot poſſibly be in his right Senſes: For, as in com-

common Madneſs, by the Violence of ſome Paſſion, the Spirits of a Man are ſo agitated, that in that Rage they are not governed by Reaſon; ſo it is with the habitual Sinner. For having ſet his Heart paſſionately upon ſome worldly Object, all his Spirits are engaged in the Purſuit of it, and with that Heat and Vehemency, that nothing can ſtop their Career, nor bring them under the Guidance of Reaſon. No Conſiderations of God, no *Terrors of the Lord*, can amend them, the Checks of Conſcience are no longer regarded; but let the Conſequence be ever ſo fatal, the Paſſion muſt be obeyed. SERM. XXXIV.

AND, as a Man that is mad, regards no Danger, but will even wound and torment himſelf; as he will prefer the verieſt Trifles to the richeſt Preſents a Man can offer him, and will be moſt injurious to thoſe, that are moſt deſirous of doing him Good; ſo it is the very ſame with the preſumptuous Sinner. He deſpiſes the Counſels of God's Word, ſlights his Promiſes, laughs at his Threatenings, and even defies the Almighty. Thoſe who are moſt deſirous of doing him Good, who adviſe him

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for the beſt, and reprove his Folly, he hates, and ſpeaks Evil of. Now, is it not evident, that ſuch a Man contradicts the very Principles of Reaſon, and the Intimations of his own Conſcience, violates the Laws of Wiſdom, goes croſs to all Rules of Prudence, nay, even his very Intereſt, and the very Principles of Self-Preſervation? And what greater Proofs can we have of a Man's Madneſs, than ſuch Proceedings are? But to be more particular:

Is not that Man, who deals in all Manner of Injuſtice, when he is aſſured, that *no unrighteous Man ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, as very a Madman as any in the World?

AND may not the ſame be ſaid of the *Man of Pleaſure*, who, beſides the thouſand Inconveniences and Miſeries that attend ſuch a Courſe of Life, the frequent Diſappointments, the Loſs of Time, Health, and Fortune, the Stings of Conſcience, the inward Shame and Reproach of a Man's own Mind, incurs the Wrath of his Maker, who will ſeverely puniſh him for indulging his brutiſh Paſſions? Such an one, I ſay, muſt have forfeited his Reaſon, or he would not

not forego his greateſt Intereſts, and *ſell his Birthright for a Diſh of Pottage.* SERM. XXXIV.

Again;

WHEN we ſee a Man giving himſelf up to Impatience and Choler, and indulging himſelf in this Humour; when his Health would be beſt preſerved, his Intereſt the beſt ſecured, and his Buſineſs the better carried on by Gentleneſs and an obliging Behaviour; and when, more than all this, ſuch a Temper is contrary to the Nature of God, who is a God of Peace, and unfits a Man for the peaceful and friendly Society of Saints and Angels in Heaven, and diſpoſes him for the horrid Fellowſhip of the Devil and his Angels; I ſay, when we ſee a Man, after all theſe Things conſidered, nouriſhing Anger, and foaming at every Turn with Rage and Paſſion, we cannot ſure be unjuſt, if we ſet him down in the Number of Men that are out of their Senſes.

IF it ſhould be ſaid, that we ought not to ſuppoſe this, becauſe, on other Occaſions, wicked Men appear to be as much in their Senſes as other Men; I anſwer, that even the Mad themſelves have their Intervals

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of Reaſon, and then they will converſe with Calmneſs and Ingenuity; but do but touch them upon ſome favourite Point, and they will fly out into the greateſt Extravagance imaginable: And ſo it is with the Sinner; in the common Affairs of Life, none, perhaps, are more prudent; yet, in the Matters of the greateſt Moment, wherein the Salvation of their Souls is concerned, they will act the moſt extravagantly; which proves, that they are actuated by a Kind of Madneſs. Which being the Caſe,

LET me by all Means intreat you, neither to follow the Counſel nor Example of ſuch Men. Let your Reverence for no Man's Perſon nor Quality, entice you to Sin. Remember, that no Precedent can change the Nature of Things; but, that Vice will be always hateful to God, howſoever polite it may ſeem to Men. And unleſs wicked Men could force the Almighty to alter his Opinion, to repeal his Laws, and revoke his Threatenings, Sin will be everlaſtingly Folly, and Continuance in it, Madneſs.

Do not, therefore, that, by the Perſuaſion of any Example, which God and your own

own Conſciences will condemn; let no Man argue you out of the Belief of a future Reckoning, nor ſuffer yourſelves to ſuſpect, that God doth not ſee; for he will certainly bring every Man to Judgment. SERM. XXXIV.

IF thou haſt given in to the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, and haſt complied with its Temptations, defer not to extricate thyſelf from its Power, and repent of thy Follies. *Say not, I have ſinned, and what Harm hath happened unto me? For though the Lord is long-ſuffering, he will in no wiſe let thee go: Neither ſay, His Mercy is great, he will be pacified for the Multitude of Sins: For Mercy and Wrath come from him, and his Indignation reſteth upon Sinners.*

OUR forſaking of Sin is the only Way to avoid the Puniſhment due to the Commiſſion of it, and the neceſſary Condition of finding Mercy with God; for, upon this Condition he will pardon our greateſt Provocations, and be perfectly reconciled to us: And what greater Encouragement can we deſire, than to be received into his Favour, upon ſuch eaſy Terms?

LET me, therefore, exhort you to break off your Sins by Repentance, and to return

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unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy on you.

PUT it not off to a more convenient Seaſon, for the preſent is moſt proper: We cannot aſſure ourſelves of a Moment's Life; and, if we could, our Continuance in Sin may make God give us over to a reprobate Mind, and then we ſhall not be able to aſk for that Forgiveneſs, without which we cannot be ſaved. To conclude:

BEFORE Judgment, examine thyſelf, and in the Day of Viſitation thou ſhalt find Mercy: Humble thyſelf before thou be ſick, and in the Time of Sins, ſhew Repentance: Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy Vows in due Time, and defer not till Death to be juſtified.

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CHRIST the great SALVATION.

HEB. ii. 3.

How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation?

AS the Goſpel is deſigned to make Men, in the moſt perfect Manner, holy and good; ſo we have in it, the moſt excellent *Precepts*, delivered in the cleareſt Light, to direct our Lives, the ſtrongeſt *Aſſiſtances* to enable us to perform our Duty, and the moſt effectual *Motives* to encourage us to the Practice of what is juſt and good; ſuch as were never vouchſafed to Mankind before our Bleſſed Saviour appeared in the World. SERM. XXXV.

FOR thoſe good Principles, that the wiſeſt and moſt refined *Heathens* took ſo much Pains to come to the Knowledge of;

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as, for Inſtance, the Unity of the Supreme Being, who is of infinite Power, Wiſdom, Juſtice and Mercy; who is our Creator, Governor, and Preſerver, to whom we are indebted for all the Comforts we enjoy; we Chriſtians have them clearly ſet before us, and are perfectly informed of the Truth of them: And thoſe Doctrines, to wit, the Immortality of the Soul, Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life, the Efficacy of Repentance, and the Readineſs of God to aſſiſt Men with his eſpecial Grace in their Purſuit of Virtue, which the *Heathens*, after the moſt tedious and laborious Exerciſe of their Reaſon, looked upon as only probable, we Chriſtians have the moſt certain Aſſurance of. For,

1*ſt*, As to the Immortality of the Soul: Though the Populace among the *Heathens* did believe it, as they did every Thing that came down to them by Tradition; yet, the Men of Thought and Penetration, who would believe no farther than they ſaw Cauſe, were under great Diffidence and Doubts about it. *Socrates*, who ſeemed to have had the moſt ſettled Per-

Perſuaſion of the Immortality of the Soul, by laying down this Life, in Expectation of another, yet plainly and ingenuouſly confeſſed to his Friends, that it was not certain. And *Tully*, that great Maſter of Reaſon, though he ſometimes ſpeaks of it with great Aſſurance, yet, he oftener diſcourſes of it in ſuch a Manner, as looks as if he rather deſired it might be true, than thought it was ſo. SERM. XXXV.

BUT the Goſpel hath given us the higheſt Aſſurance poſſible of the Truth of this Doctrine. Our Bleſſed Saviour gave Men a ſenſible Demonſtration of it, in his own Perſon, by his Reſurrection from the Dead, and Aſcenſion into Heaven; and both by himſelf and his Apoſtles, (whom he endowed with the Gift of Miracles, the better to confirm the Truth of what they ſaid) did continually preach it to the World.

2*dly*, As to the Doctrine of Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life; the wiſer *Heathens* did declare their Belief of it, which they grounded upon the Juſtice, Holineſs, and Goodneſs of the Divine Nature.

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ture. They conſidered, that good Men were often exerciſed with great Calamities, and that bad Men very frequently were greatly proſperous, and abounded with whatſoever their Heart deſired: And, therefore, they thought it very reaſonable to believe, that God would, in another Life, ſhew his Hatred of Sin, and Love of Goodneſs, by making a plain Difference between the Conditions of virtuous and wicked Perſons, by puniſhing theſe, and rewarding thoſe, without Exception. But this, though it was in their Opinion a very *probable* Argument; yet, they could not think that it amounted to any Thing like Demonſtration.

BUT in the Goſpel, it is frequently and clearly declared, that there will be Rewards and Puniſhments in the World to come, ſuitable to the Actions of Men in this Life; *that Chriſt will come a ſecond Time, to judge the World in Righteouſneſs; and that all muſt appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt, to receive the Things done in the Body, whether they be good or bad.*

3*dly*,

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3*dly*, THAT Mens Sins ſhould be forgiven upon true Repentance, the *Heathens* were in ſome Hopes of, from a Conſideration of the Goodneſs and Mercy of God: But we Chriſtians have the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance of it, by the moſt ſolemn and repeated Promiſes of God himſelf; and not only, that ſome or moſt, but that all without Exception, and the moſt heinous Impieties, upon Condition of their being ſincerely forſaken, ſhall, in and through Chriſt, freely be forgiven to thoſe that have been guilty of them. For we are *freely juſtified by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt, whom God hath ſet forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood.* For, *God loved us, and ſent his Son to be a Propitiation for our Sins.*

4*thly*, THE Doctrine of God's Readineſs to aſſiſt Men by his ſpecial Grace in their Endeavours after Virtue, could be no more, at beſt, than probable in the Judgment of the *Heathens.* Indeed, ſome extraordinary Men among them did believe, that none could be great or good, without the *Divine Aſſa-*

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Afflatus, by which they meant a Sort of Inſpiration. But, yet, none of theſe had the leaſt Aſſurance, that God would not deny his eſpecial Aſſiſtance to any one that ſincerely aſked it; particularly, ſince Men have brought themſelves into a State of Imbecillity, through their own Fault. But of this, the Goſpel gives the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance to all the ſincere Aſkers of it, and informs them, that if they be not wanting to themſelves, they ſhall certainly obtain it. *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you: Seek, and you ſhall find: Knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. For every one that aſketh, receiveth; and he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened. If a Son ſhall aſk Bread of any that is a Father, will he give him a Stone? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that aſk him?*

BUT beſides theſe I have mentioned, there are many other Doctrines delivered in the Goſpel, which the utmoſt Efforts of Reaſon could never have imagined without Revelation.

WHO,

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WHO, for Inſtance, could have thought, that God was ſo fond of his rebellious and ſinful Creatures, as to ſend his only begotten Son from Heaven, to tell us the Terms upon which we might expect his Favour; and to pray, and intreat us to comply with them? Who would not immediately leave off his Sins, when he reflects upon the Dignity of the Perſon, whom God ſent to reconcile him to himſelf; and to lay before us all thoſe Parts of our Duty, that are neceſſary to reſtore us to the Divine Likeneſs, and to make us capable of enjoying that everlaſting Happineſs, he deſigns, and hath promiſed to thoſe that ſerve him?

WHO, alſo, could have thought, that God would manifeſt himſelf in the Fleſh, and become Man for our Sakes, without the Aſſurance of the Goſpel? And who alſo, after he is acquainted with this, would diſhonour that human Nature, which Chriſt was pleaſed to put on, upon our Account, and which he hath infinitely dignified in ſo doing, by Sin and Wickedneſs? Who alſo, when Chriſt by his own Example hath encouraged us to perform all that is re-

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WHO, without the Information of Revelation, could have imagined, that Mankind ſhould be ſo highly favoured by the Son of God, that, after he had ſuffered for us, and aſcended into Heaven, he ſhould become our perpetual Mediator and Interceſſor? Or,

How could it have been thought, that a Perſon indowed with the Divine Nature, called in Scripture the *Holy Spirit*, ſhould take upon him, as his Office and peculiar Province, to aſſiſt Mens Weakneſs; and, unleſs they reſiſt and repel his good Motions, ſhould promiſe, that he will never forſake them, but abide with them for ever, and carry them from one Degree of

of Grace to another, till at length it is consummate, and made perfect in Glory. SERM. XXXV.

Lastly, WHO, also, without the Help of the Gospel, could have come at the Knowledge of that great Reward, that shall be conferred upon good Men at the last Day? We are, by the christian Revelation, not only assured of another Life, wherein good Men shall be rewarded; but we are told that our Reward shall be immensly great, exceeding the Compass of our present Conceptions.

Now though, as we have observed before, many of the *Heathens* did, by the Exercise of their Reason, make it probable to themselves, that their Souls were immortal, and, that they were richly to be rewarded in another World; yet they had no Notion, that this Reward was to be so great, as the Gospel assures us it will be; there being an infinite Disproportion between the best Services, that the best of Men are capable of performing, and such a Reward as the Gospel promises; and it being impossible, also, that so great an Happiness as that of the Soul only, should be a necessary and natural Result from the highest

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Degrees of Holineſs, that are attainable in this low and imperfect State.

Now, what an Encouragement to Holineſs are the Rewards that the Goſpel propoſeth and aſſureth us of? And, who would be ſuch Enemies to themſelves, as to be the Slaves and Servants of Sin here, when, by being virtuous and good Men, they are aſſured of everlaſting Happineſs hereafter?

HAVING ſhewn, that the Precepts of the Goſpel are ſuch as tend, by natural Conſequence, to make Men virtuous and holy, I proceed next to ſhew, that the *Aſſiſtances* we receive from the Goſpel are greater, and more effectual to promote a good Life, than were vouchſafed to any People, before Chriſt came into the World.

THOUGH the *Moſaical Law* was from God himſelf, yet it was deſigned only to reſtrain thoſe, that lived under the Obligation of it, from the more *notorious* Sins: *It was added becauſe of Tranſgreſſion, till the Seed ſhould come.* The *Jews* were a very vain and ſuperſtitious People, and therefore God gave them a pompous Way of Worſhip, that might gratify their childiſh Humour,

mour, and ſo keep them from being drawn away with the Vanities of the *Heathens*, among whom they dwelt; and beſides, he gave them ſuch *Precepts*, enforced with ſuch Threatnings of the ſevereſt temporal Puniſhments, as might terrify them from the Commiſſion of thoſe Enormities and Immoralities, that had then overſpread the Face of the Earth. SERM. XXXV.

BUT it is certain, that the *Law of Moſes*, ſtrictly ſo called, did properly tend to make the *Jews* no more than externally righteous; and whoſoever was ſo, and did thoſe Works it enjoined, was eſteemed, according to that Law, juſt and blameleſs. But it was by no Means accompanied with Grace, to endue the Obſervers of it with an inward Principle of Holineſs.

AND this Difference between the *Law* and the *Goſpel*, St. *Paul* expreſſeth thus, by calling *this* the *Spirit*, and *that* the *Letter*. Not that God was ever wanting in his Grace to good Men, under the Old Teſtament; or, that the *Jews* were all deſtitute of an inward Principle of Holineſs; but that the *Law* did not contain any Promiſes of Grace, nor did the Obli-

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gation thereof extend any farther than to the outward Man: Therefore, the Apoſtle calls it *a Law of a carnal Commandment*; and the Services it impoſes, *weak and beggarly Elements*; and *a Law which made no Man perfect*. Its Promiſes were only *temporal*; upon which Account, the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* ſaith, *that the Goſpel is eſtabliſhed on better Promiſes*.

NOR were theſe Favourites of Heaven, upon any other Accounts, in Circumſtances for the obtaining a thorough Reformation of Life, comparable to thoſe with which our Saviour bleſſed his Diſciples. For, though they had, for the Subſtance, the ſame ſpiritual Precepts, which are enjoined in the Goſpel, yet theſe were enforced by no expreſs Promiſes of eternal Happineſs, or Threatnings of eternal Miſery: And, indeed, they could not well be ſuch; becauſe they had little or no Notion of a future State, any otherwiſe than by *Tradition*, or from ſome ambiguous Expreſſions of their inſpired Men: The Want of which would morally make it impoſſible for them to arrive at that Height of Virtue, and true Good-

Goodneſs, that the Goſpel deſigned to raiſe Christians to.

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IF it be objected, that, if the chriſtian Religion hath ſuch a wonderful Efficacy to promote Virtue and Piety among Men, more than any other Religion, how comes it to paſs, that the Lives of Chriſtians are as bad or worſe than theirs, who do not believe in Chriſt?

I ANSWER, that God knows, the Lives of the Generality of Chriſtians are very bad, and, perhaps, worſe than theirs, who know not ſo much as Chriſtians do.

BUT this ill Succeſs of the Goſpel ought by no Means to be imputed to the Ineffi-cacy of its Aſſiſtances, but to the *Infidelity* of thoſe who pretend to believe it; their inexcuſable Neglect of conſidering its power-ful Motives to a holy Life, and of uſing the Means conducing thereto, and pre-ſcribed by it. For, Infidelity and Want of Conſideration go Hand in Hand, and as much of Careleſneſs, as is viſible in Mens Lives, ſo much of Infidelity lurks in their Hearts; and therefore, though the Goſpel hath ſuch a Tendency to work the moſt excellent Effects in Men, yet it does not

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operate as *Charms* do, nor will it have Success without our own Concurrence. The excellent Rules of Life, laid down in the Gospel, will signify nothing to those, who neglect or do not mind them. Its *Promises* and *Threatnings* will not move, where they are not believed, or not considered. Nor can any of its Arguments have Effect, when they are not seriously and impartially weighed. Its Helps and Assistances will do no Good, where they are totally neglected. And though there be *preventing* as well as *assisting Grace* going along with the Gospel, for the effectual prevailing with Mens Wills to use their utmost Endeavours to subdue their Lusts, and to acquire virtuous Habits; yet this Grace is not such, as that there is no Possibility of refusing and quenching it; nor is it fit it should, seeing Mankind is endowed with a Principle of Freedom, and that this Principle is as essential as any other to human Nature. But further:

IF they, who profess the christian Religion, be sometimes worse than other Men, it is not at all to be wondered at. We know by Experience, that the best Things, when abused,

abuſed, do commonly ſerve to the worſt of Purpoſes: And, when Men *hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*, when they will not ſuffer it to have any good Effect upon them, God may, and frequently does, give them up to the moſt unnatural Wickedneſſes, and permits them to commit all Manner of Sin, by withholding all Reſtraint from them. It is then ſo far from being ſurprizing, that they, who will not be converted by the Goſpel, ſhould be ſo abominably wicked, that it is more ſo, that they, who continue diſobedient under the preaching of it, ſhould not be ſuch. SERM. XXXV.

BUT howſoever wicked ſome of thoſe, who make Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, may be, it is no real Argument againſt Chriſtianity itſelf, nor ought to be imputed to any Weakneſs or Inefficacy in our Religion. The End and Deſign of Chriſt's Religion is to amend and reform the Manners of Men. *He came into the World, that he might purify unto himſelf, a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*; and he hath given Men the moſt perfect Inſtructions, and Helps and Aſſiſtances ſufficient to enforce the Practice of Virtue and Goodneſs; the Effects of

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which were very great and conſpicuous in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity: And, notwithſtanding the Complaint againſt the preſent Times, there are many, who are now overlooked in the Noiſe and Hurry of the buſy World, who lead a regular and pious Courſe of Life, and are conſtant Witneſſes of the good Effect, that a ſerious Faith in Chriſt hath, and will have, upon the true Believer.

IF there be others as wicked, let us remember, that it cannot be expected, but that ſome Men will be wicked: *It muſt needs be, that Offences come; but Woe be unto that Man, through whom the Offence cometh.* God will ſeverely puniſh thoſe, who *hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*; and if Men will be wicked, in Defiance of all the Arguments of the Goſpel, in Contempt of all its Helps and Aſſiſtances, of all the Mercies, and all the Judgments of God, it is juſt for the ſupreme Governor of the World to puniſh ſuch Offenders in the moſt rigorous Manner; and he will certainly do it, in his appointed Time.

WHICH ſhould be an Argument with good Men, to perſevere ſtedfaſtly in the Courſe

Courſe they are in, leſt being tempted out of the Way, for a few momentary, ſinful Gratifications, they forfeit all their Hopes of Happineſs, and loſe their Crown of Glory, when they were juſt ready to receive it. SERM. XXXV.

AND, it ought alſo to be a Warning to all wicked Men, that, if they repent not ſpeedily, the Time will quickly come, when God will give them over as incorrigible, and they will be incapable of that Repentance, the Want of which muſt render them for ever miſerable.

Now, To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be all Power, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XXXVI.

The right METHOD of becoming truly RELIGIOUS.

PSAL. CXXX. 4.

But there is Forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.

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THOUGH the Belief of a God is the grand Fundamental of all Religion, yet no Man can be truly religious, unleſs he conceives juſt and proper Notions of his infinite Perfections. If we imbibe any falſe Opinions of the Almighty, our Worſhip will be nothing but Superſtition; and, inſtead of that Love that perfects our Obedience, we ſhall ſerve him only through Dread.

IT was a ſtedfaſt Reliance upon God's Mercy, that was the great Support of the *royal*

royal Pſalmiſt in all the Troubles and Afflictions he met with; of which, this *Pſalm* is an extraordinary Inſtance. SERM. XXXVI.

IT begins with an humble Petition to the Divine Being for his Aſſiſtance and Forgiveneſs. *Out of the Depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my Voice; let thine Ears be attentive to the Voice of my Supplications.* And though he could not plead any Merit of his own, whereupon to build his Hopes of Succeſs; yet, from an Aſſurance of God's infinite Mercy, he is certain of Pardon. *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark Iniquities*, and ſhouldſt ſtrictly examine my Life and Actions, I ſhould certainly be condemned: *But there is Forgiveneſs with thee*; thou kindly inviteſt us into thy Service, and by thy Readineſs to pardon all thoſe that are truly penitent, thou makeſt us to become religious: But unleſs we were confident of thy Mercy, we could not be ſo; for it is from an Aſſurance of thy Willingneſs to forgive us, that we fear thee. *But there is Forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.*

IN diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I will endeavour to ſhew you, what Steps we

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THE firſt Method, that we are to take, is to purge our Minds of all unworthy Thoughts of God; to look upon him as a Being of infinite Goodneſs, and very deſirous of the Salvation of his Creatures: For if we in the leaſt ſuſpect his Willingneſs to make us happy, or entertain any Doubts of his Goodneſs, all our Religion will degenerate into Superſtition. Inſtead of that free and manly Converſe, that ought to be maintained between God and his Creatures, we ſhall only flatter him in a ſervile Manner, and worſhip him through Fear. And, indeed, how is it poſſible, that Men ſhould addreſs themſelves to the ſupreme Being with any Pleaſure and Confidence, while they conceive any frightful Ideas of him? How can they entertain any chearful and friendly Society with one, who appears ſo horrible and tremendous to them? It is true, their Fears will oblige them to worſhip him, but it will be only a forced Devotion, that hath no Life or Spirit in it, both irkſome to themſelves, and ineffectual to bring down any Bleſſing from Heaven:

For

For God will never accept any Service, whoſe Foundation is only Compulſion; and ſuch is the Service of thoſe, who look upon God as an auſtere and cruel Maſter. Unleſs, therefore, we frame a lovely Image of him we can never abſolutely give up ourſelves to the Divine Will. But, if we look upon him as the moſt benign, good Being, we ſhall embrace freely whatſoever he commands, and think that nothing but Good, can proceed from him. And if our Conceptions of God be not ſuch as make us heartily love him, as then we ſhall ſerve him only with a forced Obedience, ſo we ſhall obey him with a baſe and ſordid Affection. SERM. XXXVI.

THE next Thing, after we have conceived proper Ideas of God, is to purify our Intentions, and take care that they be unſpotted in his Sight. We muſt intercede with him, to aſſiſt us in our Devotions, and deal with us, as Perſons, whoſe ſole Aim is to obey his Commands. We muſt above all Things deſire to know, what that good, that perfect and acceptable Will of the Lord is; and to ſtick at nothing to perform it: And this will prepare us to caſt

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caſt off that Sluggiſhneſs in our Natures, and diſpoſe us to ſearch out the Divine Will. We muſt engage ourſelves to be very diligent in finding out the Truth, and by no Means reſt contented with what firſt offers itſelf; but examine and prove all Things, and then *hold faſt that which is good.* It is a very common Fault, for Men to take up Opinions upon the Credit of others, becauſe this ſaves them a great deal of Trouble; but it is more ſafe to enquire diligently, *what the Will of the Lord is:* For the more rational our Perſuaſion is, of the Truth of the chriſtian Religion, and the more we underſtand of the true Deſign of Revelation, ſo much the more ardent will be our Obedience to God. It will make us ſhake off all the Drowſineſs of our Souls, and ſuffer us not to reſt, till we are animated to do the Will of the Lord in all Things.

HAVING brought ourſelves to this Temper of Mind, we muſt next ſearch our Conſciences, and examine what Sins we are guilty of; ſome of which may lurk ſo ſafely, or look ſo agreeably, that, unleſs our Faith be right, we may overlook them,

or

or not esteem them as Faults: But we must be very exact in our Search for them, and confess them humbly before God, resolving never to harbour them again. We must never enter into any Parley with them, nor listen to the Voice of those fatal Charmers. It is certain, we shall find great Difficulties to part with our old Acquaintance; but the Trouble will be greatly diminished, if we confess our Sins so, as to hate them, and purge ourselves from all Affection for them. And to do this, we must cleanse our Souls from all their Defilements; we must not have the least Inclination for any evil Way, or entertain any Kindness for our cast-off Desires: For if we give them the least Encouragement, it is great Chance, but they insinuate themselves into our Favour; if they hold a Place in our Hearts, they will in a little Time regain the entire Possession: For many and various are the Arts of Sin; and though Virtue hath the sole Privilege of being innocent, yet Vice very often pretends to it: It knows how to put on an harmless Dress, and to pass under such borrowed Titles, as shall conceal it from the

SERM. XXXVI. the Knowledge of thoſe, who are afraid of nothing but its Name and its Puniſhment. Such Danger ſhould warn us not to ſuffer the leaſt Affection for any Sin to remain in us; for if we carry the leaſt Good-Will for any, they will ſoon return, and take Poſſeſſion of us.

BUT as this will be a difficult Taſk, it will be neceſſary to lay down ſome Rules, as a Guide to direct you how to do it.

1ſt, A GOOD Reſolution can never be founded, but upon a particular Survey of every Thing, that is to be undertaken by us. We muſt reflect ſeriouſly, whether we can be ſober in our Opinions of Things, in our Thoughts of ourſelves, in our Deſires, and in our Eating and Drinking; whether we can be peaceable and patient, humble and pure: For all this we muſt be; and if we have the leaſt Exception to any one, our Reſolution is not rightly founded.

SOME Men are pleaſed to perſuade themſelves, that, if they be not guilty of any great and notorious Sins, they may be excuſed the indulging themſelves in a favourite Vice or two; and to encourage themſelves in this Practice, are very ready in

in repeating theſe and ſuch like Paſſages of the ſacred Writings, *There is no Man righteous, no not one*; and that *in many Things we offend all.* If they believe on Chriſt, they think they are entitled to everlaſting Life, though they may be defective in their Obedience to his Commands: And, if they find in themſelves that they love him, they hope that *much will be forgiven to them, that love much.* SERM. XXXVI.

BUT theſe are very dangerous Deceits, and ſuch as we ought by all Means to avoid: For though it be impoſſible for Men to be perfect, ſince, by the Infirmity of human Nature, the moſt Righteous frequently fall; yet they cannot be ſuppoſed to be *Sins of Infirmity*, which are known to be Sins, at the very Time of Commiſſion. To perſiſt in doing a Thing, which we know we ought not to do, argues a Contempt of the Almighty, a Neglect of his Authority, or a Diſbelief of his Promiſes and Threatnings.

So neither ought any Action to be looked upon, by us, as an Act of Frailty, which is contrary to the expreſs Letter of God's Word; and therefore let us, accord-

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ing to the Advice of St. *Paul*, *beware that no Man deceive us with vain Words; for they, who do ſuch Things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

AFTER all this, we muſt aſk ourſelves, whether we can abſtain from the captivating Pleaſures of the World; whether we can be meek under the moſt provoking Affronts, and be content and eaſy, ſhould it pleaſe God to reduce us to a Neceſſity of receiving that Charity from others, which we uſed to give ourſelves? We muſt conſider further, that the Path of Vice is eaſy and pleaſant, while that of Virtue is rugged and troubleſome; and though this latter leads to everlaſting Happineſs, yet the Way to it, is ſo full of Stones and Briars, that it requires great Courage to travel through them; and though the other ends in eternal Miſery, yet the Road that leads to it, is ſo delightful and tempting, ſo full of Pleaſures and Amuſements, that it requires a ſtrong Reſolution to leave it, and to be convinced, that what is at preſent ſo agreeable, can ever lead us to Miſery and Ruin.

BUT,

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BUT, to fortify ourſelves againſt our own Weakneſs, we ſhould beg of God, that he would ſtrengthen our Reſolution, and vouchſafe to aſſiſt us by his Holy Spirit, that we may be able to overcome all the Difficulties we ſhall encounter with.

AND if we ſincerely and ardently pray for that Aſſiſtance, to do and perform what God requires of us, he will never be wanting on his Side, to enable us to do it. If a compaſſionate and tender Parent will not deny the Requeſts of his Children, much leſs will God *deny his Holy Spirit to them that aſk him.* And if we have this, our weak and imperfect Nature will be able to perform what is enjoined us.

BUT if at any Time we ſhould be aſſaulted with ſome particular Temptation; that we may not be able of ourſelves to reſiſt, to encourage us to a brave Oppoſition, we have the Promiſe of God, *that he will with the Temptation, alſo make a Way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.* Of the Truth of which, we are all of us, in ſome Degree or other, Witneſſes; who, in thoſe Temptations that we have reſiſted, have found ourſelves wonderfully

SERM. XXXVI. ſupported by the Influence of God's Holy Spirit, in our Reſolutions of doing our Duty.

BUT yet, if, notwithſtanding our ſincere Endeavours to keep ourſelves undefiled, we fall into the Commiſſion of Sin, there is, Thanks be to God, Forgiveneſs with him: Upon Repentance, he readily forgives: For *he takes no Pleaſure in the Death of a Sinner; but is willing that all ſhould repent and live. Have I any Pleaſure at all, that the Wicked ſhould die, ſaith the Lord God, and not that he ſhould rather turn from his Ways, and live*[a]?

BUT, as God, on his Part, promiſeth to forgive us upon Repentance, ſo we on ours muſt take care, that this Repentance be real, and performed at a proper Time; otherwiſe we ſhall only deceive ourſelves, and forfeit that Salvation, that is promiſed to true Repentance. Now, true Repentance is not only a Sorrow for Sin, but an actual forſaking it, and Amendment of Life: *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father that*

[a] *Ezek.* xviii. 22.

that is in Heaven. And, indeed, could a bare Confeſſion of the Immorality of any Action that we commit, joined with a preſent Uneaſineſs of Mind for the Commiſſion of it, make us true Penitents, there would be but few, that would not be ſuch; becauſe there are but few Men, that have brought themſelves to believe, that there is no Difference between Virtue and Vice: The Generality of Men own the Lovelineſs of the one, and the Deformity of the other; but this Acknowledgment, when a Man hath tranſgreſſed the Rules of Virtue, will ſignify little as to the Clearing him from the Guilt of it, in the Sight of God, unleſs he alters his Courſe of Life. This is the only Thing, that God will accept as true Repentance; and if we do this, he will forgive the greateſt Sins we can commit. *If the Wicked will turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die. All his Tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be mentioned unto him: In his Righteouſneſs that he hath done, he ſhall live.* SERM. XXXVI.

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HERE we ſee, that this Pardon of Sin is promiſed to the Sinner that leaves off his wicked Courſes, and *does that which is lawful and right*; that manifeſts his Sincerity by a new Behaviour, and by his future Obedience makes up for his former Follies and Extravagance. And if this be the Caſe, as it certainly is, it muſt be Infatuation in every one to delay their Repentance to the laſt, in Hopes of God's Forgiveneſs, when that very Delay is a Tranſgreſſion of their Duty, and adds to the Number of thoſe Sins, they deſign, at ſome diſtant Time, to repent of. Such a Repentance, if it can be ſtiled Repentance, muſt be extremely hazardous; becauſe there is nothing in Scripture, that can give us any Hopes that it will ſucceed: On the contrary, we are bid to do our Work while it is Day, *for the Night cometh when no Man can work*; we are exhorted, *to make no long tarrying to turn unto the Lord, nor put it off from Day to Day; for ſuddenly ſhall the Wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy Security thou ſhalt be deſtroyed.*

AND further, this delaying our Repentance is contrary to the very Deſign of the

Goſpel, which is to promote Piety and Virtue among Men: But if by repenting at laſt a Man might be ſecure of Salvation, Piety and Virtue would be ſo far from being promoted by Chriſt's Religion, that it would give the greateſt Encouragement to Sin; as we find it actually does, in thoſe Men, who are perſuaded of the Efficacy of a late Repentance. The Charms of Sin are too perſuaſive not to be liſtened to, were we aſſured, that the Repenting of them, at our laſt Hours, would be ſufficient: Few Men would be ſo rational, as to avoid the Pleaſures that they give us, from a philoſophical Senſe of their being unbecoming a wiſe Man, if they could be ſecure, that God would forgive them, upon their ſhedding a few Tears at the laſt, and aſking his Pardon for their Follies. SERM. XXXVI.

No! No! *God is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*; and, as he is holy himſelf, he will reward none but ſuch as imitate him in his Perfections. If we expect to be happy in the next World, we muſt walk in all the Commandments of the Lord; we muſt make his Laws the conſtant Rule of our Practice; which if we do not com-

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ply with, we ſhall be puniſhed as unprofitable Servants. To think that we ſhall be forgiven, if we aſk Pardon for our Sins at the laſt, looks as if we thought that God was ſo fond of us, that he will forgive us upon the very Appearance of Repentance: But let us not deceive ourſelves; for the Condition of entering into Life is the Keeping his Commandments, without which we cannot be ſaved. Indeed, God will forgive all real Infirmities: But to ſin on, in Hopes of repenting afterwards, is preſumptuouſly to offend now, that we may aſk Pardon hereafter; which is ſuch Behaviour, as deſerves the ſevereſt Puniſhment.

And God grant, that none of us may ever merit it, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XXXVII.

The OBSERVATION and PERFORMANCE of both Inſtituted and Moral DUTIES, neceſſary to make our OBEDIENCE perfect, and accepted by GOD.

PROV. xv. 8.

The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord: But the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight.

BAD Men have, ever ſince Religion was firſt inſtituted in the World, laid great Streſs upon the *Ceremonial Part* of it; that they might be, by that external Obedience, excuſed for the Neglect of *Moral Duties*. SERM. XXXVII.

AMONG the *Jews*, the *Phariſees* were exceeding ſtrict and punctual in obſerving the

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the *Ceremonial Part of the Law*, and even *paid Tithe of Mint and Cumin*; but at the ſame Time were exceſſively wicked, and unnatural to their Parents; whom they cruelly ſtarved, under an impious Pretence of ſerving God, and of having given him, what would have ſupported the other: And the ſame miſtaken Notion prevailed in *Solomon's* Time, which he endeavoured to refute, in the Words of the Text: *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord; but the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight.*

IN diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I will ſhew,

I. THAT no *Inſtituted Service* of God, ſuch as Sacrifice was among the *Jews*, will ever be accepted by him, inſtead of the Practice of *Moral Duties*. But,

II. THAT if the Practice of the Inſtituted Part of Religion is followed by the Obſervation of the *Moral Duties*,

ties, then is our Obedience perfect, or acceptable to God. SERM. XXXVII.

I. No *Inſtituted Service* of God, ſuch as Sacrifice was among the *Jews*, will ever be accepted by him, inſtead of *the Practice of Moral Duties.*

THE End, or Deſign of God's inſtituting Sacrifice and other Rites in the *Jewiſh* Religion, was by that Means to promote the *Practice* of *Moral Duties.* Thus, when the Sacrifice was offered for the Atonement of their Sins, it was to let them ſee, that God had an Abhorrence and Hatred for Sin, and that it was only of Mercy, that he accepted the Blood of the Beaſts, inſtead of puniſhing them; and to put them in Mind of the fatal Conſequence of Sin, and the Obligation they had to die to Sin, if they would be reconciled to God. So alſo their Sacrifices of Thankſgiving were proper to keep up a Senſe of their Dependence upon Almighty God, and of their being obliged to his Favour and Bounty, for all the Bleſſings they received. *Circumciſion*, alſo, was not only the Sign of a Covenant between God and

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and them; but also a Sign of the Obligation they were under, of parting with their Lusts, if they would be capable of receiving any Benefits by it. Agreeable to which Sense, *Moses* bids the Children of *Israel*, *circumcise the Foreskin of their Hearts*; and tells them, *that if they would be obedient to the Commands of God, the Lord their God would circumcise their Hearts, and the Hearts of their Seed, to love the Lord their God with all their Hearts, and with all their Souls, that they may live*[a]. And St. *Paul* says, *that Circumcision was of no Profit, but to the Keepers of the Law*[b]. Their *legal Washings, were to teach them that God was pure, and that no Person could hope for his Favour, that did not endeavour to be pure from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit.* So by the Command to abstain from certain *Meats*, they were to understand, that they were to avoid those Sins and Dispositions, that had a Resemblance to those Creatures they were to abstain from.

But, when they had no Regard to the *moral* Intention, when the *external* Observances

[a] *Deut.* xxx. 6. [b] *Rom.* ii. 25.

ſervances did not make them better Men, SERM. the Prophets were ordered, in the Name XXXVII. of God, to expoſtulate with them thus: *To what Purpoſe is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me? ſaith the Lord: When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your Hand, to tread my Courts? Bring no more vain Oblations, Incenſe is an Abomination unto me; the New-Moons, and Sabbaths, the Calling of Aſſemblies I cannot away with; it is Iniquity, even the ſolemn Meeting: And when ye ſpread forth your Hands, I will hide mine Eyes from you; when ye make many Prayers, I will not hear*[a]. Inſtead of being ſo exact in your outward Purifications, *Waſh ye* inwardly, make your Deſires clean; *put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; ceaſe to do Evil, learn to do well; ſeek Judgment, relieve the Oppreſſed, judge the Fatherleſs, and plead for the Widow:* Inſtead of abſtaining from certain Meats, abſtain from Violence and Oppreſſion. Theſe are the conſiderable and important Duties, and more acceptable to God, *than Thouſands of Rams, or ten thouſand*

[a] *Iſaiah* i. 11, &c.

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ſand Rivers of Oil; which were no further ſerviceable, if they did not make us juſt to our Neighbours, virtuous in ourſelves, and humble and obedient to God. *Behold, to obey*, ſays *Samuel* to *Saul*, *is better than Sacrifice*; *and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams* [a].

AND under the Goſpel, our daily Prayers, which are the ſpiritual Sacrifice of a Chriſtian, will be equally ineffectual, while our Hearts are full of Malice and Wickedneſs. It will be to no Purpoſe, that we reverence the Temple, and the Worſhip of God, unleſs we forbear thoſe Sins, which render our Prayers an Abomination to him. We ſhall be in the ſame Situation with the *Jews*, whom the Prophet *Jeremiah* was ſent to call to Repentance: *Truſt ye not in lying Words, ſaying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are theſe: For will ye continue to ſteal, murder, commit Adultery, and ſwear falſly, and come and ſtand before me, ſaith the Lord, in this Houſe, which is called by my Name? Therefore will I caſt them out of my Sight; and pray not thou for this People, neither lift up Cry nor Prayer for them, neither make*

[a] 1 *Sam.* xv. 22.

make Intercession to me; for I will not hear thee[a]. SERM. XXXVII.

HAVING shewn, that no *Instituted Service* of God, such as Sacrifice was among the *Jews*, will ever be accepted by him, instead of the *Practice of Moral Duties*, I come now to shew,

II. THAT if the *Practice* of the *Instituted Part of Religion* is followed by the Observation of the *Moral Duties*, then is our Obedience perfect, and acceptable to God: *The Prayer of the Upright is his Delight.*

As God is a Being of all Perfections, he is naturally delighted with those, who endeavour to resemble him; their Prayers, which they offer, will meet with a kind Acceptance, as he knows they flow from a Sense of their Dependence, and a grateful Acknowledgment of Favours and Mercies. And this is the Meaning of the Phrase of God's being delighted with the Prayer of the Upright; he grants their Petitions, both publick and private; those, because offered to give him his due Honour, as he is our Creator

[a] *Jer.* vii. 4, 9, 10, &c.

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Creator and Governor; and theſe, from a Conviction *that he is about our Bed, and ſpieth out all our Ways*; but he can in no other Senſe be ſaid to be delighted, becauſe, as he is infinitely happy in himſelf, he cannot admit of any Addition, or ſuffer any Decreaſe.

WILL God, therefore, anſwer our Petitions, which we preſent to him in the Uprightneſs and Integrity of our Hearts? Let us endeavour to have thoſe Qualifications, that never fail to render us acceptable to him; which are Juſtice and Mercy to Men, and Piety and Obedience to God. Juſtice to Men obligeth us, in our different Employments, to act with Honeſty and Integrity; to be without Fraud and Deſign; to injure and oppreſs none; to be faithful in our Dealings, and to make a Conſcience of doing as we would be done by. If we are deficient here, however ſcrupulous and exact we may be in our outward Service of God, and conſtant in his Temple, our Prayers will be an Abomination to him.

MERCY to one another, is alſo an indiſpenſable Duty, and is what God requires,

we

we ſhould love to do, and take a particular Delight in. SERM. XXXVII.

THE Lord himſelf is good to all, and *his tender Mercies are over all his Works*; and there are none of us, but every Moment taſte and experience how merciful the Lord is.

BY his preventing Grace we are freed from many Dangers and Calamities we are ſubject to; he ſtops malignant Vapours, and ſays to the deſtroying Angel, Stop here; and to the Plague, Move no farther.

HIS Forbearance manifeſts itſelf in deferring our deſerved Puniſhment: Though we are continually provoking him, by our daily and numberleſs Tranſgreſſions, yet the Lord waiteth that he may be gracious, and doth not willingly afflict or grieve the Children of Men.

HE comforts us in our Diſtreſſes, relieves us in our Neceſſities, and delivers us from our Enemies, and from thoſe Preſſures, and Hardſhips that perplex and torment us: And though our Sins are great, and our Iniquities without Number, yet he pardons our Tranſgreſſions, and receives us into Mercy.

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LET us imitate the merciful Nature of God; for nothing leſs than the ſame Diſpoſition in us, will make our Prayers delightful to him. Malicious, revengeful Tempers, which are implacable to thoſe who have offended them, and inexorable to thoſe who implore their Mercy, are hated by God, and he hath proteſted, that *that Man ſhall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath ſhewed no Mercy.* We ſee that he revoked his Pardon, after he had forgiven the Servant that owed him ten thouſand Talents; becauſe he was inexorable to his Fellow-Servant, who was indebted to him but an hundred Pence: *And the Lord ſaid unto him, O thou wicked Servant, I forgave thee all that Debt, becauſe thou deſiredſt me: Shouldeſt not thou alſo have had Compaſſion on thy Fellow-Servant, even as I had Pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the Tormentors, till he ſhould pay all that was due unto him*[a]. Beſides, if we continue cruel and unforgiving, our Prayers, inſtead of bringing down Bleſſings, will bring down Curſes upon us; for every Time

[a] *Matt.* xviii. 32, 33, 34.

Time we put up this Petition, *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*, we are imprecating againſt ourſelves; the Terms of our own Forgiveneſs, being the Pardon of our offending Brother. SERM. XXXVII.

How can we expect alſo, that God will hear our Prayers, when we entreat him to aſſiſt our Wants, if we are unmerciful to our indigent Brother? His Wants may eaſily be ſupplied, and our greateſt Bounties are nothing in Compariſon to that which we receive from the Hands of God. He is continually giving us his good Things; and let us diſpenſe Part of his Bleſſings to thoſe who ſtand in Need of them. Then will our Prayers and our Alms come up for a Memorial before God; he will never forget what we have done upon his Account, but abundantly reward us for it. *If thou haſt much, give plenteouſly. If thou haſt little, do thy Diligence gladly to give of that little: For ſo gathereſt thou thyſelf a good Reward in the Day of Neceſſity*[a]. Further:

If we would have our Prayers agreeable to God, and be in his Love and Favour, it

[a] *Tobit* iv. 8, 9.

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it muſt be by ſhewing the ſame Kindneſs and Affection to others, as we would have God ſhew to us. *Let us put on, therefore, (if we would be the Elect of God, holy and beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel againſt any; even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye.*

THE next Qualification to our being juſt and merciful towards Men, is walking humbly with God; without which we cannot hope for any Succeſs in our Prayers to him.

To walk humbly with God, is to believe his Being, and to frame right and worthy Notions of his Perfections; to behave ourſelves in all our religious Duties, with Reverence and Diſtance, and to have ſuch an Awe and Dread of him, as becomes us to expreſs towards the Judge and Governor of the World.

A JUST Notion of God and his Perfections, would keep us within the Circle of our Duty, and is the true Foundation of all Religion.

THE Conſideration of the Eternity of God, is a ſure Ground of Truſt and Con-

fidence. For though the Power and Friendſhip of Men may fail, and Death put an End to their Deſigns of ſerving us, with God it is quite otherwiſe; for he is the ſame to Day and for evermore. God who liveth for ever, hath promiſed to reward his Servants eternally. SERM. XXXVII.

A JUST Notion of the ſpiritual Nature of God will remove all Confidence in any external Rites and Ceremonies: And even our Prayers will be eſteemed by us of no Efficacy, unleſs we improve in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs of Mind.

MEDITATION on the *Immutability* of God will teach us, that he will give to every Man according to his Works; that he will by no Means clear the Guilty; that no Art, or Force, or Interceſſion, ſhall make him change his Determinations to puniſh impenitent Sinners: And this will make us afraid how we fall into his Hands, and not ſuffer us to truſt in any fooliſh and vain Expectations of Mercy.

IT will alſo leave us no Room to doubt of his rewarding faithful and good Men, who perſevere in the Purſuit and Practice

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of what is juſt and right, and of his forgiving the truly Penitent.

REFLECTIONS on the *Omnipreſence* of God, will make us not dare to think of impoſing upon him, but endeavour to behave ourſelves in all Places, as conſcious that we are in his Preſence. Our Prayers, both publick and private, will be ſincere and fervent, knowing that he hears and ſees all we do, that our moſt private Vices are ſet before him, and our *ſecret Sins in the Light of his Countenance.*

THE *Omnipotence* of God will command our Obedience and Fear, when we conſider that he is able to ſave and to deſtroy: There is no Poſſibility of eſcaping from his Power; for *he is wiſe of Heart, and mighty in Strength: Who hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and hath proſpered? The Lord of Hoſts hath purpoſed, and who ſhall diſannul it? His Hand is ſtretched out, and who ſhall turn it back?*

THE *Holineſs* of God obligeth us to imitate him, and to hate all Sin and Wickedneſs: *As he which hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy in all Manner of Converſation; for he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity:*

He

He cannot but condemn what is contrary to Truth and Righteouſneſs; and therefore, whoever ſhall preſume to addreſs him in publick Worſhip, without ſerious Reſolutions of turning from his evil Ways, and doing what is lawful and right, affronts the Holineſs and Purity of God, and his Prayers and Devotion will be an Abomination to him. For the chief End of Religion is the Improving of moral Virtue, and if that is not advanced, it is no Matter how often we have been at Church, or how many Times we have prayed every Day; theſe will never be remembered, unleſs it be to add to the Juſtice of our Condemnation, who have ſo often drawn near to God with our Lips, when our Hearts were ſo far from him. SERM. XXXVII.

TRUE Religion conſiſts in the Imitation of God's moral Attributes; and whoever imitates him in his Goodneſs, Mercy, and Hatred of Sin, in his Juſtice, Patience, and the like, *is that upright Man, whoſe Prayers are* ſaid to be *his Delight*.

IF we make any Thing elſe Religion, we call it by a wrong Name; for it is nothing elſe but Superſtition, and will bring

SERM. XXXVII.

forth none of these good Fruits, which true Religion is productive of.

IF, therefore, you would avoid the Guilt of offering the abominated Sacrifice of the Wicked, *purify yourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*; cleanse yourselves from the Pollutions of the Flesh, which raise God's Anger against us, and *glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's.*

SER-

SERMON XXXVIII.

On CHRIST's ADVENT.

ROM. xv. 8, 9.

Now I ſay, that Jeſus Chriſt was a Miniſter of the Circumciſion, for the Truth of God, to confirm the Promiſes made unto the Fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his Mercy.

FROM theſe Words I will endeavour to ſhew, that *Jeſus Chriſt* was that great Perſonage that was promiſed to the Fathers, throughout the Old Teſtament; and that all the ancient Prophecies of a *Meſſiah*, were fulfilled in him.

IN order to do this, I will,

I. CONSIDER what theſe *Promiſes* and *Prophecies* were.

II.

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II. SHEW that the chriſtian Interpretation of them is the true one, or that they were fulfilled in *Jeſus Chriſt*.

I. I AM to conſider what theſe *Promiſes* and *Prophecies* were.

WHEN our firſt Parents had offended God, by eating the forbidden Fruit, and were to be turned out of *Eden*, which Paradiſe they forfeited by their Tranſgreſſion; God, *who in his Wrath thinketh upon Mercy*, promiſeth them, that *the Seed of the Woman ſhould bruiſe the Serpent's Head*. By which Promiſe ſomething more is to be underſtood, than *Adam*'s having a Power of deſtroying this brute Creature, for deceiving him, and ruining his Poſterity: For what Conſolation could it be to our firſt Parents, after they had ſuffered ſo much from the Cunning of that Creature, to be told they might kill him, whenſoever they met him? Without doubt, our firſt Parents underſtood this Promiſe in a more extenſive and comfortable Senſe, and took it as an Aſſurance, that the Damage, they had received in their Fall, ſhould be re-

repaired by one of her Offspring, who ſhould, in his proper Time, deſtroy the Power of the *great Deceiver of Mankind*, and reſtore that Life and Immortality, of which they had deprived both themſelves and their Poſterity. SERM. XXXVIII.

WHO that great Deliverer was to be, they were not informed; it being not thought proper, at that Time, to know more than was enough to comfort them under their preſent Affliction.

AFTER the *Flood*, when God had taken *Abraham* and his *Family* to be his choſen People, he renews the Promiſe, that he had made in general Terms to *Adam*, and confines it to *Abraham*'s Family: *In thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed.* Afterwards it was limited to the Poſterity of *Judah: The Sceptre ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until Shiloh come*[a]. And, laſtly, to the Houſe of *David: And there ſhall come forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jeſſe, and a Branch ſhall grow out of his Roots*[b].

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[a] *Gen.* xlix. 10. [b] *Iſaiah* xi. 1.

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As the Time of his Appearance drew nearer, the Prophets were more explicit in their Deſcriptions of the *Meſſiah*.

THE Prophet *Iſaiah*, after he had exhorted the *Jews* to Repentance, in his firſt Chapter, begins his ſecond with a Deſcription of *Chriſt*'s Kingdom. *And it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt Days, that the Mountain of the Lord's Houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the Top of the Mountains, and ſhall be exalted above the Hills; and all Nations ſhall flow unto it. And many People ſhall go and ſay, Come ye, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the Houſe of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his Ways, and we will walk in his Paths; for out of Zion ſhall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jeruſalem.*

So alſo, in the ſeventh and ninth Chapters, he tells us the Manner of Chriſt's Nativity, and the Greatneſs of his Excellence. *Therefore the Lord himſelf ſhall give you a Sign: Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a Son, and ſhall call his Name Immanuel*[a]. *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the Government ſhall be*

[a] *Iſaiah* vii. 14.

be upon his Shoulders; and his Name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor; the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the Increaſe of his Government and Peace there ſhall be no End; upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it, and to eſtabliſh it with Judgment, and with Juſtice, from henceforth even for ever [a].

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IN other Places of his Prophecy we read, in expreſs Words, the glorious Acceſſion of the *Gentiles*. *Ariſe, ſhine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee. For behold, the Darkneſs ſhall cover the Earth, and groſs Darkneſs the People; but the Lord ſhall ariſe upon thee, and his Glory ſhall be ſeen upon thee. And the Gentiles ſhall come to thy Light, and Kings to the Brightneſs of thy Riſing* [b].

AND, in the ſixty-firſt Chapter, the Office of Chriſt is clearly ſet forth. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, becauſe the Lord hath anointed me to preach good Tidings unto the Meek, he hath ſent me to bind up the Broken-hearted, to proclaim Liberty to the Captives, and the Opening of the Priſon to*

[a] *Iſaiah* ix. 6, 7. [b] Chap. lx. 1, 2, 3.

SERM. XXXVIII. *to them that are bound: To proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord* [a].

In other Places of Scripture we read of the expreſs Time of his Coming; as for Inſtance, That *the Sceptre ſhould not depart from Judah till Shiloh come. Know therefore and underſtand, that from the Going forth of the Commandment to reſtore and to build Jeruſalem, unto the Meſſiah the Prince, ſhall be ſeven Weeks* [b]. *Behold, I will ſend my Meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the Way before me; and the Lord, whom ye ſeek, ſhall ſuddenly come to his Temple; even the Meſſenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts* [c].

These are ſome of the numerous *Promiſes* and *Prophecies* relating to the Coming of the *Meſſiah:* And without mentioning any more, I will proceed,

II. To ſhew, that the chriſtian Interpretation of them is the true one; or, in other Words, that they were fulfilled in *Jeſus Chriſt.*

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[a] *Iſaiah* lxi. 1, 2, 3. [b] *Dan.* ix. 25. [c] *Mal.* iii. 1.

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I HAVE already obſerved, that the Promiſe of the *Seed of the Woman to bruiſe the Serpent's Head*, muſt have been underſtood by our firſt Parents, of ſome *great Deliverer*, who was to reſtore them to their loſt Happineſs, though they had but a very obſcure Notion of him; as appears from *Eve*'s miſtaking *Cain* for him.

Now, that the chriſtian Application of this *Promiſe* to *Jeſus Chriſt* is a true one, may appear from theſe Conſiderations.

1. THE Perſon promiſed is ſaid to be the *Seed of the Woman*; which was exactly fulfilled in *Jeſus Chriſt*, who was miraculouſly born of a Virgin, as related by the Evangeliſts, whoſe Teſtimony cannot be fairly diſputed, upon Account of the Miracles they performed to confirm the Truth of what they ſpoke and taught.

2. As our firſt Parents, by their Tranſgreſſion, involved their Poſterity in their Guilt, it was neceſſary that this *Seed of the Woman* ſhould be ſuch a Perſon as could reſtore them to God's Favour, and to that Life and Immortality they had loſt. Now, ſuch a one was *Jeſus Chriſt*; for as to his *Dignity*, he was *the Firſt-born of every Creature*;

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Creature; and being born without Sin, he was the moſt proper to mediate for ſinful Man; and God was pleaſed to accept of his voluntary Sufferings, and ignominious Death, as a ſufficient Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World. *In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveneſs of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace. For God hath not appointed us to Wrath, but to obtain Salvation by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And,

3. As this *Promiſed Seed* was *to bruiſe the Serpent's Head*, by which our firſt Parents underſtood, that the *Perſon promiſed* was to defeat the Devices of their great Enemy, ſo *Jeſus Chriſt* hath done this, by reconciling Men to God, and procuring Pardon for their Sins; and hath moreover *bruiſed* his *Head* in deſtroying his Empire, by taking human Nature upon him, and dying for Mankind. *Foraſmuch as the Children are Partakers of Fleſh and Blood, he alſo himſelf likewiſe took Part of the ſame; that through Death he might deſtroy him that had the Power of Death, that is the Devil*[a].

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[a] *Heb.* ii. 14.

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THE next *Promiſe* of a *Meſſiah*, is that which God made to *Abraham*: *In thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed.* The which Promiſe, that it is rightly applied to Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall be my next Buſineſs to ſhew.

THAT *Abraham*, by this Promiſe, underſtood that God would cauſe ſome wonderful Perſon to ariſe from his Family, who ſhould be a common Bleſſing to Mankind, is evident from the Nature of it: And that by this extraordinary Perſon, was meant the *Meſſiah*, appears from all that follows in the Old Teſtament relating to that Matter; and from this plain Expoſition of St. *Paul*, *The Scripture foreſeeing that God would juſtify the Heathen through Faith, preached before the Goſpel unto Abraham, ſaying, In thee ſhall all Nations be bleſſed*[a].

AND that this extraordinary Perſon was Jeſus Chriſt, the ſame Apoſtle tells us: *Now to Abraham and his Seed, were the Promiſes made: He ſaith not, And to Seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Chriſt*[b].

[a] *Gal.* iii. 8. [b] Ver. 16.

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How eminently he was a *Bleſſing to all Nations*, may appear from his doing every Thing for Mankind, that could render them happy here, or hereafter: In Regard to our Conduct here, he hath given us a true Notion of ourſelves, and ſuch a Knowledge of God, as may both engage us to imitate him, on Account of the Perfections of his Nature, and dread to offend him, from a Conſideration of his Power and Juſtice.

He hath alſo given us a true Knowledge of our miſerable Condition; and as he hath told us of our Diſeaſe, he hath alſo preſcribed to us an infallible Cure: Which is, to regulate our Paſſions, and live according to that moſt holy Law and Rule of Life, that he hath given us. And leſt the Temptations of the World ſhould be too powerful, he hath provided us abundant Help and Aſſiſtance, having promiſed *to give his Holy Spirit to them that aſk it*, to comfort and ſupport us in all our Afflictions, and Conflicts with our ſpiritual Enemies. And that there might be nothing wanting to compleat our Happineſs, he hath diſcovered to us the Certainty of a future State, and the

the inexpreſſible Felicities that wait good Men there; all which, if we conſider it together, ſufficiently ſhews that nothing more could be done by any one to make himſelf a *Bleſſing to all Nations.* SERM. XXXVIII.

THE next *Promiſe* or *Prophecy* of the *Meſſiah* is, that he ſhould ariſe from the Poſterity of *Judah*; but as *David* was of the Tribe of *Judah*, from whoſe Loins the *Meſſiah* was afterwards foretold to ſpring, I ſhall only obſerve, that, as God had promiſed, that *of the Fruit of David's Loins, according to the Fleſh, he would raiſe up the Meſſiah to ſit upon his Throne for ever*, Jeſus Chriſt was that Perſon promiſed; and that the Apoſtle's Application of the Prophecy of *Nathan* to *David* [a], to Chriſt, is juſt and right. For, that Jeſus was the Son of *David*, the Genealogies in the New Teſtament demonſtrate; his Mother being of the Family of *David*, by his Son *Nathan*, and his ſuppoſed Father a Deſcendant from *Solomon*: For the Truth of this, St. *Paul* appeals to the *Jews*, as a Thing that was not denied by them. *For it is evident*, ſays he, *that our Lord ſprang out of Judah* [b].

[a] 2 *Sam.* vii. 12, 13, 14. [b] *Heb.* vii. 14.

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THE *Meſſiah* alſo was to be a *King, having the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the utmoſt Parts of the Earth for his Poſſeſſion:* Which is true likewiſe of Jeſus Chriſt. For though he was not to be a temporal Prince, ſuch an Authority being inconſiſtent with one, *who was to be a Bleſſing to all Nations,* and with his Deſign of bettering Mankind by the Practice of Piety and Holineſs; royal Courts being Places where Sincerity, Humility, and Goodneſs are ſeldom found, much leſs taught and practiſed; yet he was a King, though his Dominion is of a ſpiritual Nature: And therefore, when it is promiſed, that the *Meſſiah* ſhould ſit on *David's Throne, and reign over the Houſe of Jacob for ever,* it muſt be underſtood only to ſignify, that he ſhould reign over the *Iſrael of God,* his elect and choſen People. Which Kingdom, Chriſt ſet up at his Coming into the World, and which at his ſecond Coming will be glorious and everlaſting; when ſhall be *given him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom, and all People and Nations ſhall ſerve him. His Dominion is an everlaſting Dominion, and his Kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed.*

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THE Characters alſo, which I have already obſerved the Prophets give of the *Meſſiah*, are fulfilled: For, as *Iſaiah* expreſly declares, that the *Meſſiah* was to be born of a Virgin, *Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive and bear a Son, and ſhall call his Name Immanuel*; ſo we have the infallible Aſſurance of the Evangeliſts, that Jeſus Chriſt was born of a pure Virgin; who tell us, that *the Angel Gabriel was ſent from God to a Virgin eſpouſed to a Man, whoſe Name was Joſeph: And before they came together, ſhe was found with Child of the Holy Ghoſt.*

AND as this Son, according to the Intention of the Prophecy, was the Perſon foretold by all the Prophets; and by the different Characters which are given him in this Prophecy, is to be underſtood *the Son*, by Way of *Eminence*; ſo does the New Teſtament declare, *that Jeſus Chriſt is the only begotten Son of God*, having had a Being *with the Father before the World was; and that God ſent him into the World, that we might live through him.*

Is the *Meſſiah* deſcribed, as one *having the Government upon his Shoulders*, called *Wonderful, Counſellor, the mighty God, the*

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everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace? So do the Characters of Jesus Christ, in the New Testament, answer all these Marks, which the Prophet gives us of the *Messiah*.

CHRIST's Government is thus described by St. *Paul: He sitteth at the right Hand of God, being Head over all Things; exalted far above all Principality and Power, and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come: Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made subject unto him.*

Is the *Messiah* called *Wonderful*, which Word in the Original signifies *secret*, and by which the Dignity of the *Messiah* is supposed not to be known before Christ's Birth? So, in the New Testament, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is called *the Mystery, which hath been hid from Ages, and from Generations, but now is made manifest to his Saints: The Mystery which was kept secret since the World began, but now is made manifest.*

Is the *Messiah* called *Counsellor*, that is, one to whom God's Counsels are known? So Jesus

Jesus Christ, by St. *Paul*, is said *to be acquainted with the eternal Purposes of God*[a]; and Christ himself says, *None knoweth the Father, but the Son*[b]. SERM. XXXVIII.

Is the *Messiah* called *the Mighty God, the everlasting Father?* So the Apostles stile Jesus Christ, *the Heir of all Things, Lord of all, Lord both of the Living and the Dead, the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.* Indeed, the Expression, *everlasting Father*, seems to confound the Persons of the Father and the Son; but if it be translated *the Father of the World to come*, as the *Septuagint* hath done it, the Harshness will be removed, and it will be more consonant to that Passage of St. *Matthew*[c], and those of St. *Paul*[d], where the State of the Gospel is called *the Age, or World, to come.*

Is the *Messiah* called *the Prince of Peace?* So doth this Title belong eminently to Jesus Christ, whose Nativity was ushered in by Angels with this Hymn, *Peace on Earth, Good-Will towards Men*; and St. *Paul* tells us, *we have Peace with God, through our Lord*

[a] *Ephes.* iii. 10. [b] *Matt.* xi. 27. [c] *Matt.* xii. 32. [d] *Heb.* ii. 5. *and* vi. 5.

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Jesus Christ; having reconciled both Jew and Gentile unto God, in one Body, by the Cross.

WAS there to be a glorious Accession of the *Gentiles* under the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, as *Isaiah* says, *The Gentiles shall come to thy Light, and Kings to the Brightness of thy Rising?* And was it prophesied, that *to him the Gathering of the People should be?*

WHAT greater Accomplishment could there be of these Predictions, than the surprising *Conversion* of the *Gentile World* to the *Faith* in *Christ?* The wonderful Spreading of which is described by *an Angel flying through the Midst of Heaven, and preaching the everlasting Gospel to every Nation, and Kindred, and Tongue*[a]. *All Nations*, as the Prophet foretold, *flowed unto it*; and in spite of all the Hardships, Prejudice and Discouragement the Preachers of it laboured under, they overcame all Opposition, and spread the Knowledge of the Lord in all Lands.

How far, also, Jesus Christ answers to the Descriptions that *Isaiah* gives, in another Place, of the *Messiah*[b], needs very little to de-

[a] *Rev.* xiv. 6. [b] *Isaiah* lxi. 2.

determine. For *the Spirit of the Lord did rest upon him; and God gave him of his Spirit without Measure.* SERM. XXXVIII.

How manifestly he *preached the Gospel to the Poor*, and *bound up the Broken-hearted*, appears in every Part of his Ministry; who went about *preaching the Gospel to those Poor in Spirit*, and *to those Broken-hearted*, who were oppressed with a just Sense of their Sins, and endeavoured to find a Cure for them.

HE *proclaimed Liberty to the Captives*, by freeing them from the Chains of Sin, and from their greatest Enemy the Devil.

HE gave Sight to the Blind, not only by miraculously curing those that were so; but by *opening their Eyes, and turning them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God.*

HE preached the acceptable Year of the Lord, by releasing Men from the Servitude of Sin, and restoring them to their original Liberty.

THE Time that the Scriptures set for the Coming of the *Messiah*, was to be when the Scepter was to depart from *Judah*, that is, when the *Jews* were to have no

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no longer a ſovereign Authority; which actually was the Caſe at the Time of Chriſt; and after his Death, the Temple and City were deſtroyed; ſo that the *Jews* have not been a Nation ever ſince, according to this Prophecy of *Daniel*, *After threeſcore and two Weeks ſhall Meſſiah be cut off, but not for himſelf; and the People of the Prince that ſhall come, ſhall deſtroy the City and Sanctuary*[a].

FROM all which, we have an unanſwerable Proof, that Chriſt was the true *Meſſiah*: For, as he appeared at the predicted Time, ſo his Character agreed (as I have ſhewn) with the Deſcriptions the Prophets give of him; and as he appeared not in the Character of a conquering *Meſſiah*, which the *Jews* falſely imagined he was to do, it is evident he was no Deceiver, becauſe ſuch an one would have humoured the Hopes and Expectations of the People, and have uſed, or taken Advantage of thoſe Expectations, to have raiſed himſelf to be their King and Governor. And further,

IF, notwithſtanding that Chriſt appeared in ſuch an outward mean Condition, he

[a] *Dan.* ix. 26.

he was the eternal Son of God, this ſhould teach us to believe in him, and obey his Commandments. *See that ye refuſe not him that ſpeaketh; for, if they eſcaped not, who refuſed him that ſpake on Earth, much more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from Heaven. The Wrath of God is* now *revealed from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men*; and thoſe, who offend now againſt the Conviction of ſo much Evidence, and will not hear, and obey the only begotten Son of God, muſt expect a more ſevere Puniſhment, as Deſpiſers of ſo clear a Revelation of God's Will. SERM. XXXVIII.

LET us, therefore, my Brethren, *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without Wavering,* and beg of God, *who hath cauſed all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, that we may in ſuch wiſe hear them read, mark, and inwardly digeſt them, that by Patience and Comfort of his holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold faſt the bleſſed Hope of everlaſting Life, which he hath given us in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Amen.

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SERMON XXXIX.

On CHRIST's NATIVITY.

Preached at *Bath*, *December* 25, 1743.

LUKE ii. 13, 14.

And ſuddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the heavenly Hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the Higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good-Will towards Men.

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THE Evangeliſt informs us, at the ſeventh Verſe of this Chapter, that as ſoon as *Mary had brought forth her firſt-born Son, and wrapped him in ſwaddling Cloaths, and laid him in a Manger, becauſe there was no Room for them in the Inn, the Angel of the Lord appeared to ſome Shepherds, that were keeping Watch over their Flocks by Night.* And when, by *the Glory of the Lord ſhining round about them, they*

were ſore afraid, he ſaid, *Fear not, for behold, I bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which ſhall be to all People. For to you is born this Day in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord. And this ſhall be a Sign to you, Ye ſhall find the Babe wrapped in ſwaddling Cloaths lying in a Manger. And then there ſuddenly was with the Angel a Multitude of the heavenly Hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the Higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good-Will towards Men.* SERM. XXXIX.

BEFORE I diſcourſe on theſe Words, it will be neceſſary to make ſome Obſervations on the Context, as proper to raiſe in us a due Senſe of God's tender Affection for Mankind, who *ſent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him.*

THE firſt Thing that offers itſelf to our Thoughts, is, the *Perſons*, to whom the Angels brought theſe Tidings of great Joy.

IF it ſhall ſeem wonderful to any, from a Reflection upon this Paſſage, that Beings of ſo exalted a Nature, as the *Angels* are ſuppoſed to be, and in particular, ſo eminent an one, as the *Angel of the Lord*, a Phraſe

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Phraſe always in Scripture denoting one of a ſuperior Rank and Dignity, ſhould deſcend from Heaven to inform a Company of poor Shepherds that were tending their Flocks, of the Birth of our Saviour; and not rather, in a more publick Manner, and to Perſons of a higher Character, divulge the Nativity of the *Meſſiah*, ſo that the whole Nation of the *Jews* might have had no Doubt, who the Perſon they expected was; we muſt conſider, that, as *Abraham* and *David*, to whom the Promiſe of a *Meſſiah* was firſt made, were Shepherds, ſo God was pleaſed that the Completion of that Promiſe ſhould be firſt revealed to Shepherds. Beſides,

If we allow God to be infinitely wiſe, he muſt, certainly, beſt judge, who are the moſt proper Perſons to diſcover his Deſigns to, and the moſt effectual Manner to do it in: And, therefore, that the *Angels* did not reveal his Birth to the *Nation* of the *Jews*, or to the *Sanhedrim* in particular, was, undoubtedly, for Reaſons that beſt ſuited the Circumſtances our Saviour was in, at that Time. For, poſſibly, had the Prieſts and Rulers of the *Jews*, who

who expected a temporal *Meſſiah*, that was to reduce all Nations under his Command, been told, that their expected Conquerot was at *Bethlehem*, in a poor deſpicable Condition, and that he was not to have been ſuch a Prince, as they falſely imagined, it might have been ſuch a Diſappointment to their Hopes, that they would have thought the *Revelation* a *Deluſion*; and therefore God deferred the Manifeſtation of his Son, till he entered upon his miniſterial Office, that the great End of his Coming into the World might not be obſtructed. SERM. XXXIX.

YET, God left not the Birth of his Son without Witneſs, that the Expectation of the *Jews* might be kept up; for he illuminated his Nativity with the Appearance of a *new Star*, that put *Jeruſalem* into great Hopes, and drew ſome *Wiſe Men* from the *Eaſt* to worſhip him; who being commanded by *Herod* to find out where the young Child was, came, under the Guidance of that heavenly Light, to *Bethlehem*; and after they had paid their Obedience to him, *being warned of God in a Dream*, they returned into their own Coun-

try

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try by another Way: Where, without doubt, they informed their Countrymen of what they had met with, and ſo prepared them to believe, hereafter, in the Name of that Perſon, who was foretold to be a *Light to lighten the Gentiles.*

THE next Thing remarkable, is the *Time* of Chriſt's *Birth: To you is born, this Day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord.*

WHY God choſe that particular Time for the Birth of the *Meſſiah*, is not for us to determine; it is ſufficient to anſwer, that the infinite Wiſdom of God is the beſt able to judge of the propereſt Seaſons to fulfil his Will: But if we may be allowed to give a Reaſon, *that Time* might be the moſt proper, becauſe God foreſaw that the World would be beſt prepared to receive him. For as Chriſt's Religion was to be the Religion of Mankind, and to be *preached to all the Nations of the Earth*, ſo the Time, when he came into the World, ſeems to be the moſt proper to do that, becauſe the *Romans*, by their Conqueſts, had made the Communication of one Nation with another very eaſy: Beſides, the World,

by

by the great Improvement of *Moral Philoſophy* were more ready to receive *that Religion*, one great End of which was to make *Morality* as compleat as poſſible. And further, the Learning and Thirſt of Knowledge, which then flouriſhed in the World, diſpoſed Men to ſearch after Truth; and the Tranſlation of the Bible into the moſt polite Language of thoſe Times, had given them great Expectations of the Appearance of ſome *wonderful Perſon*. All which Things conſidered together, evidently prove, that this was the propereſt Seaſon for Chriſt's Appearance. SERM. XXXIX.

THE third Thing remarkable is, the *Place* and *Manner* of *Chriſt's Birth*.

THE Place was the City of *Bethlehem*, as was foretold by the Prophet *Micah*[a]: *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the Thouſands of Judah, yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Iſrael.* And as to the humble Manner of our Saviour's Coming into the World, though this did not anſwer the *Jews* Expectation, yet it was not without very glorious Circumſtances, being

[a] *Micah* v. 2.

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uſhered in with a cœleſtial Appearance of Angels, ſinging Praiſes to their Divine Creator; which is ſufficient to make any reaſonable Man believe, that this was all deſigned by the Will of God; and was a ſtronger Proof that he was beloved of God, than if his Birth had been uſhered in with worldly Marks of Honour, and Grandeur. Having premiſed thus much,

I PROCEED to conſider the Words of the *Text*, and make ſuch Reflections on them as they will fairly bear, and are proper for the preſent Occaſion.

THE *Angel of the Lord* having removed the Fears of the *Shepherds*, by the joyful Meſſage that he brought them, the *Text* ſays, *Suddenly there was a Multitude of the heavenly Hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the Higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

THESE good Beings, who are always pleaſed with, and anxious for the Happineſs of Mankind, were full of Joy, at the Proſpect of their bleſſed Condition, being reconciled unto God by Jeſus Chriſt's taking human Nature upon him. For though they might have had ſome Notion

tion that Man was to be redeemed from the Curſe, that *Adam* brought upon him by his Tranſgreſſion, yet they did not know in what *Manner* it was to be: That *God was to be manifeſted in the Fleſh, was the Myſtery of Godlineſs that was hid from the Foundation of the World*, unknown either to Men or Angels. The laſt, St. *Peter* tells us, deſired to look into theſe Things, but they were hid from them; and, therefore, we may ſuppoſe, that, when, by the Birth of Jeſus Chriſt, that great Secret was diſcovered to them, their *Joy* was equal to their *Tenderneſs* and *Love* for Mankind; and that, as at the *Creation* of the World they ſhouted for Joy, they muſt be much more tranſported for the *Redemption* of it. SERM. XXXIX.

THIS is the Meaning of this Expreſſion, *Glory be to God in the Higheſt*. And ſhall theſe good Beings, who have no further Concern in the Redemption of Mankind, than in the Pleaſure they receive from our Salvation, be ſo ready to praiſe God for the Mercies we partake of, and ſhall we be negligent ourſelves in praiſing his holy Name? Were they ſo deſirous to look into, and know the Time when theſe Things

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ſhould happen, and ſhall we, for whoſe Benefit they were revealed, be backward in receiving them?

LET theſe Mercies affect us with ſuch a Senſe of our Obligation as they deſerve; and let us imitate theſe good Angels in the Sincerity, though we can never equal them in the Purity of our Praiſes.

THE next Thing to be conſidered is, what is to be meant by *Peace on Earth.*

THE Prophets have very expreſly told us, that the *Meſſiah* was to be a *Prince of Peace*, and *his Miniſters the Publiſhers of Peace:* And that the *Bleſſings of Peace* ſhould be upon the Subjects of this glorious Son and Succeſſor of *David.* But as the *Jews* were greatly diſappointed in that *Peace* and *Tranquillity* they expected under his Reign, and Chriſtians were forewarned to expect *Diviſions* and *Perſecutions*; it will be neceſſary to conſider the *Nature* of that *Peace*, which the *Meſſiah* was to give to the World. And,

1. BY *Peace on Earth*, is not to be underſtood ſenſual Eaſe and worldly Pleaſures, which were vainly expected by the *Jews*; but *ſpiritual* Peace and Comfort through

through our Reconciliation to God, by his accepting that Sacrifice which Chriſt offered for the Sins of the whole World. *This is that Peace* which was promiſed, and in Reſpect of which, the *Meſſiah* was called the *Prince of Peace.* Agreeably to which, St. *Paul* tells us, *we have Peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* We may now addreſs ourſelves boldly to the *Throne of Grace*, ſince we are ſure of ſo good and powerful a Mediator, who hath reconciled an offended Deity to his Creatures. For by Chriſt's Appearance in the Fleſh, and dying for us, God hath forgiven the Sons of Men that great Debt, which they were never able to diſcharge themſelves; and we need now never doubt of obtaining any Thing from God, that is proper for us to aſk, being ſeconded by ſuch an Interceſſor, in whom he is well pleaſed, and who is able to ſave all that come unto God by him. SERM. XXXIX.

How greatly ſhould our Hearts exult with Joy, when we conſider this aſtoniſhing Inſtance of the Divine Mercy and Compaſſion to us! What an Eaſe does a Reflection on what Chriſt hath done, adminiſter to a wounded Conſcience! What

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a Comfort to deſpairing Sinners! But yet, leſt our Confidence ſhould be in vain, it is neceſſary, that we reform our Natures, and become really good. For, though we have ſuch Encouragement to rely on Chriſt's Mediation, we muſt not think that God is willing to forgive our Sins, unleſs we, on our Parts, are willing to forſake them. For Chriſt did not come into the World to reconcile us to God, that we might have a Licence to ſin with Impunity. No; this would have been unworthy of the Son of God, and impoſſible for a good Being to have allowed. On the contrary, the End of Chriſt's Incarnation was as much to reform the World, and cure the Corruption of human Nature, as to ſatisfy the Divine Juſtice, to which the Sons of Men were obnoxious, by the Sin of *Adam*.

WITHOUT Repentance therefore, and ſincere Obedience for the future, we can receive no Advantage from the Incarnation of Chriſt, or plead the Merit of his Sufferings as a Satisfaction for our Iniquities.

2. BY *Peace on Earth*, is to be underſtood, that the Tendency of Chriſt's Doctrine

trine is ſuch, as neceſſarily muſt promote *Peace on Earth*, wherever it is ſincerely embraced and followed. Indeed, Chriſt tells his Diſciples, that he did not *come to bring Peace on Earth, but a Sword*; and that the neareſt Relations ſhould be divided upon his Account, *the Father againſt the Son, and the Son againſt the Father*, &c. But this did not proceed from the *Temper of his Doctrine*, but from other Cauſes at that Time, which conſpired to verify his Prophecy. For though he did not come to give the Land of *Judea that Peace*, and thoſe happy Days, which they expected at the Coming of the *Meſſiah*, but a Sword, and continual Wars and Diſcords to deſtroy them, not only by their Enemies the *Romans*, but by their own Hands, as was remarkably evident at the *Siege* of *Jeruſalem*; yet the Tendency of his Doctrine is ſuch, as naturally makes for the Peace and Harmony of the World. All his Diſcourſes were intended to conciliate the moſt endearing Love, and to make Men of one Heart and of one Mind. SERM. XXXIX.

In his divine Sermon on the Mount, among the other Beatitudes, he pronounces

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thoſe Perſons bleſſed, that ſhall promote the Peace of Mankind: *Bleſſed are the Peace-Makers, for they ſhall be called the Children of God.* And *Zacharias* gives it in his Song, as one Part of the *Meſſiah*'s Character, that he ſhould *guide our Feet into the Way of Peace.* And when our Saviour was going to be offered up for the Sins of Mankind, he tells his Diſciples, leſt they ſhould be diſconſolate, ſaying, *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you: Therefore, let not your Heart be troubled.* But it would be endleſs to quote Texts of Scripture to prove what the Whole is every where promoting. I ſhall therefore only obſerve, that as throughout the Old Teſtament *God* was ſtiled the *Lord of Hoſts*, ſo in the New Teſtament he is pleaſed to be called the *God of Peace.*

LET us, therefore, if we would be called the *Children of God*, and imitate the Example of our Lord and Saviour, *as much as lieth in us, live peaceably with all Men*; and endeavour what we can to promote the Happineſs of all, whom we have an Opportunity to ſerve. Let us forgive and paſs by the Injuries we may receive from others,

others, conſidering the great Favours and Mercies we have received from God, though unworthy of the leaſt of them. For ſhall God be reconciled to us, and ſhall not we be reconciled to one another? Shall Jeſus Chriſt come into the World to ſave us from the Wrath of an offended Deity, and ſhall not we forgive an offending Brother? We have an Account in the Goſpel [a], that the King, though he had forgiven the Debt of *ten thouſand Talents* to his Debtor, becauſe he had not wherewithal to pay him, yet reverſed his Promiſe, becauſe he had ſhewed no Compaſſion to his poor Fellow-Servant. *So alſo will our Heavenly Father do unto us, if we forgive not our Brother his Treſpaſſes*; the forgiving of him being the expreſs Condition of our own Pardon.

HAVING ſeen what is meant by *Peace on Earth*, I come next to conſider the laſt Expreſſion in the Text, *Good-will towards Men.*

THIS I will conſider as it hath a Reſpect to the *Heathen* World, and ſhews the Mercy of God to *them*, in his ſending his Son

[a] *Matt.* xviii. 24.

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Son into the World to take human Nature upon him.

HAD Chriſt not appeared in the World, it would for ever have been involved in Darkneſs and the Shadow of Death: The God of Nature would never have been known; Men would have wandered in eternal Uncertainties, and have ſearched but in vain for real Happineſs. For ſuch an univerſal Darkneſs had overſpread the Face of the Earth, that the Knowledge of the true God was quite loſt, and a Rabble of falſe Deities ſet up, to the eternal Diſgrace of human Reaſon. There was nothing ſo ridiculous, but Superſtition found ſome to abet it, and no Vice ſo horrid, that was not made a Proof of their Devotion to ſome or other of their Gods. And while the Vulgar was ſwallowed up with Superſtition, and a Plurality of Gods, the Men of Penetration and Thought ran into another Extreme; for, juſtly deteſting the Religion of their Countries, and their Doctrines, as an Affront to human Reaſon, they concluded that Religion and Reaſon were inconſiſtent; and, therefore, that there was no ſuch Thing as Religion: Which made

made every one, that would be thought wiſe, to doubt of every Thing; and ſo by keeping themſelves as clear as poſſible from the Follies of the common People, they fell into Errors as pernicious as thoſe they deſpiſed, and became Atheiſts out of Abhorrence to Idolatry. SERM. XXXIX.

IF there were any among them, that thought there was an eternal, infinite, wiſe Being, they came to no Certainty about him; and if they hit upon any Truth, which they often did, they ſo blended it with Error, that, if it was not immediately loſt, it was of no Service in the Direction of their Lives, or in the Reformation of their Manners. Thus were they incapable of bringing the World out of their Errors, and correcting their Ignorance, whoſe own Underſtandings were bewildered, and their Diſcoveries very imperfect: Beſides, had they hit upon any Scheme of Religion that had been right, they would have wanted an Authority ſufficient to enforce their Doctrines, without which, whatſoever they taught would have been uſeleſs.

BUT *Jeſus Chriſt*'s Coming into the World hath diſpelled all the Clouds of Dark-

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Darkneſs that covered it; and his Doctrine, by the divine Authority of his Father manifeſted in him, hath cleared up all thoſe Difficulties, that perplexed the wiſeſt Philoſophers among the *Gentiles*. All their Diſputes about the Providence of God, and his Interpoſition in human Affairs, are cleared up by this one Expreſſion of our Saviour's, *The very Hairs of your Head are all numbered* [a]: That is, your minuteſt Concerns are under the Direction of God, as well as the greateſt.

ALL their Reaſonings concerning the Words and Actions of Men, whether they are accountable for them to God, or not, are decided by this Text, *I ſay unto you, that every idle Word that Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give Account thereof in the Day of Judgment* [b].

IN a Word, the Certainty of a future State, the Knowledge of the Nature of God, and his Attributes, his Goodneſs in the Government of the World, are now no longer Myſteries to us. Our Saviour hath taught us our Duty in all Points, and given

[a] *Matt.* x. 30. [b] Chap. xii. 36.

given us a Religion reaſonable for Man to practiſe, and worthy of God to accept. SERM. XXXIX.

How thankful, therefore, ought we to be, for all the Mercies we have received from God, and for all the Loving-kindneſſes he hath ſhowered down upon us!

AND yet, alas! how unworthy are too many among us of theſe Favours, who ridicule this great Myſtery of Chriſt manifeſt in the Fleſh, and diſpute againſt Revealed Religion, by the Aſſiſtances they have evidently received from it? For, if Reaſon, unaſſiſted with Revelation, was ſufficient to find out all thoſe Duties that *Chriſt* hath diſcovered to us, how came it to paſs that the ableſt Men among the *Gentiles*, who were no Way inferior to the Moderns, either in Capacity or Learning, could not arrive to a Knowledge of them? To which no ſatisfactory Anſwer can be given, but that theſe Things were not deducible from the Power of natural Reaſon; otherwiſe, thoſe great Men, who were ſo induſtrious to find out Truth, had not been ignorant of them.

LET us, therefore, be grateful for the Advantages we enjoy above thoſe Men,

and,

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and, by a virtuous and holy Life, make ſure of that Happineſs that is deſigned for us.

AND to this End, let us beg of our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, that he would give us ſuch a Senſe of his Love in taking human Nature upon him, that we may be entirely directed by his Will, and with all our Hearts believe and practiſe thoſe ſacred Doctrines, and divine Truths, he hath revealed to us; and that his Grace may ſo direct us, that his Religion may never be an Offence to us, but that we may *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without Wavering*; and at laſt obtain that *Crown of Righteouſneſs*, which is laid up for all thoſe that love him, and expect his *ſecond* and more glorious Appearance.

SER-

SERMON XL.

CHRIST the LIGHT to lighten the GENTILES.

LUKE ii. 32.

A Light to lighten the Gentiles.

THE Time being come, when our Saviour was to be preſented, St. *Luke* informs us, that at the very ſame Time, when his Parents brought him into the Temple to do for him after the Cuſtom of the Law, (which was to pay the Price of his Redemption, being their Firſt-born,) *old* Simeon, *to whom it was revealed by the Holy Ghoſt, that he ſhould not ſee Death, before he had ſeen the Lord's Chriſt, came by the Spirit into the Temple*[a]; and being by immediate Inſpiration informed, that that Child,

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[a] *Luke* ii. 27.

SERM. XL. Child, which he then ſaw, was the promiſed *Meſſiah, took him up in his Arms*, and with great Devotion *bleſſed God, ſaying; Lord, now letteſt thou thy Servant depart in Peace, according to thy Word; for mine Eyes have ſeen thy Salvation, which thou haſt prepared before the Face of all People; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy People Iſrael.*

IN diſcourſing upon this Paſſage of Scripture, I will ſhew,

I. WHOM we are to underſtand by the *Gentiles.*

II. THAT it was foretold of Chriſt, that he ſhould be a Light to the *Gentiles.* And,

III. WHAT we are to underſtand by Chriſt's being ſaid to be a Light to the *Gentiles*; or, in other Words, how he was ſo.

I. WHOM are we to underſtand by the *Gentiles?*

BY

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BY the *Gentiles*, throughout the whole Scripture, we are to underſtand all thoſe Nations that did not live according to the Law of *Moſes*, nor worſhip the true God; and it is a ſynonymous Term with the Word *Heathen*, which we ſo often meet with in the Old Teſtament. Sometimes indeed, what we tranſlate *Gentiles*, are in the Original called *Greeks*[a]; but, then, it hath the ſame Signification, the *Greeks* being put for all the reſt of the idolatrous Nations[b].

BETWEEN all theſe Nations and the *Jews*, there was the greateſt Hatred imaginable, ariſing from a mutual Contempt for each other. The *Heathens* looked upon the *Jews* as a deſpicable, ſuperſtitious Nation: The *Jews*, on the other Hand, treated them as the *Off-ſcouring of the World, and Aliens from God:* And withal, conſidering themſelves as the Poſterity of the Worſhippers of the true God, to whom the Promiſes were made, they appropriated to themſelves all the promiſed Bleſſings, to the Excluſion of all other Nations. With theſe Prejudices the Apoſtles themſelves

[a] *Rom.* iii. 9. [b] *Rom.* i. 16.—*and* x. 12.

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were also as strongly possessed as any of their Countrymen, as appears in many Places of the holy Writings, until it pleased God to take away the Mist from their Eyes, and to teach them, that, as he was the Creator of all Men, so he meant them all well, and *that in every Nation, whosoever feared him and worked Righteousness, should be accepted by him.*

II. HAVING briefly shewn you, whom we are to understand by the *Gentiles*, I come, in the next Place, to shew, that it was foretold of Christ, that he should be a *Light* to them.

THE *Tidings of great Joy*, which the Angel brought to the Shepherds, on the Night of the Nativity of the Son of God, were not only to be joyful News to them, and to the *Jewish* Nation, but *to all People*: The *Messiah* was not only to be *the Glory of his People Israel*, because *by him God did visit and redeem his People*; but he was also to be *a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be for Salvation to the uttermost Parts of the Earth.* He was to be not only the *Expectation of Israel*, but he was likewise the *Desire of all Nations*; and the Prophets

foretold of him, *that the Heathen were to be given for his Inheritance, and the utmoſt Parts of the Earth for his Poſſeſſion:* He was *the Root of Jeſſe, which ſhould ſtand as an Enſign of the People, to which the Gentiles ſhould ſeek.* In a Word, he was that Royal Perſon, of whom the *Pſalmiſt* ſung, *Men ſhall be bleſſed in him, all Nations ſhall call him bleſſed.* And *Iſaiah*, ſpeaking of the Acceſſion of the *Gentiles* to the Church of God, ſays, *And the Gentiles ſhall come to thy Light, and Kings to the Brightneſs of thy Riſing. They gather themſelves together, they come from far.—The Abundance of the Sea ſhall be converted unto thee, the Forces of the Gentiles ſhall come unto thee.* And in another Place, he ſays, *It is a light Thing that thou ſhouldſt be my Servant to raiſe up the Tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the Preſerved of Iſrael: I will alſo give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayſt be my Salvation unto the End of the Earth*[a]. SERM. XL.

III. HAVING ſhewn that it was foretold by the Prophets, that Chriſt was to be a *Light to the Gentiles*, I come now to explain

[a] *Iſaiah* xlix. 6.

SERM. XL. what we are to understand by Christ's being a *Light to the Gentiles*; or, in other Words, how he was so.

LIGHT in the New Testament is used to denote that Doctrine, which our Blessed Saviour revealed to Mankind. *If our Gospel be hid*, says St. *Paul*, *it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the* Light *of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them*[a]. And Christ himself, in respect to his Doctrine, is said to be a *Light come into the World*; as his Disciples were also stiled the *Lights of the World*, for the same Reason.

Now, why the Doctrine of our Blessed Saviour is called *Light*, is by Reason of its universal Benefit to Mankind: For, as by the Medium of *Light*, we are enabled to see and admire the Wonders of the natural World, and the Goodness of its great Creator, so by this *spiritual Light*, we are let into the Knowledge of those Things, of which the World were ignorant before, and yet, which were most necessary for them to know. For,

By

[a] 2 *Cor.* iv. 3, 4.

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BY this enlightening Doctrine of our Bleſſed Saviour, we have right Apprehenſions of the Nature and Perfections of the Divine Being; his *Unity*, *Spirituality*, *Eternity*, *Incomprehenſibility*, and *Immutability* are taught us; as alſo the *Infiniteneſs* of his *Power*, *Wiſdom*, *Holineſs*, *Juſtice*, and *Goodneſs*, and all the other *Perfections* of his Nature, that may raiſe our Admiration, engage our Love, and excite our Veneration for him.

BY this ſacred Doctrine, we know who is Creator and Preſerver of all Things, that by his Providence rules and governs the World, and in a particular Manner regards and obſerves the Actions of Men, whoſe virtuous Deeds, he hath promiſed, ſhall meet with a bounteous Recompence of Reward, and hath threatened eternal Puniſhment to the Workers of Iniquity.

Now, in Regard to theſe Things, the *Heathen* World is truly ſaid to have *ſat in Darkneſs*, till the Revelation of the Goſpel enlightened their Underſtandings, and reformed their Manners: They *were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, walking according to the Courſe of this World, according to the Prince*

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of the Power of the Air; they walked in the Vanity of their Mind, having their Understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that was in them, becauſe of the Blindneſs of their Heart; and being paſt Feeling, did give themſelves over unto Laſciviouſneſs, to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs. They were *vain in their Reaſonings, and their fooliſh Heart was darkened; profeſſing themſelves Wiſe they became Fools: And as they did not like to retain God in their Knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate Mind.*

IN this Condition was the *Gentile* World; they were very wicked and very ignorant. The Worſhip and Knowledge of the true God was entirely baniſhed from among them; and, conſequently, all thoſe *Attributes* or *Perfections* of the Deity, that excite our Love, and engage our Affections, were unknown, and therefore could have no Influence upon them: From whence it came to paſs, that they conceived the Deity under terrible Ideas, as a cruel and implacable Being, that delighted in the Miſery of Mankind, and would be appeaſed with nothing leſs than the Blood of Men, and the Sacrifice of their own Infants.

Thus,

Thus, the Father of all Mercies, who might have been known to be of another Diſpoſition, from a due Conſideration of that Goodneſs, that appears in the Creation of ſo many Things for Mens Comfort and Satisfaction, was diſhonoured by them. They alſo were ignorant of the ſpiritual Nature of God, had the groſſeſt Miſapprehenſions of his moral Perfections, and aſcribed ſuch Qualities to him, as would be a Diſhonour to any reaſonable Creature. Nor was all this at all wonderful; for, though Man may, by a natural Uſe of his Capacities, arrive at a Knowledge of God, yet, as they *did not care to retain him in their Knowledge*, but darkened their Underſtandings by vain Imaginations, and corrupted their Wills by evil Affections, *for this Cauſe, God gave them over to a reprobate Mind, and they changed the Truth of God into a Lye.* SERM. XL.

AND this Darkneſs was not only among the Vulgar: For the Philoſophers themſelves were as much puzzled and confounded as the Multitude; nay, *profeſſing themſelves Wiſe they became Fools*, and advanced the moſt monſtrous Doctrines concerning the

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Deity, that could enter into the Heart of Man.

THOUGH the infinite Variety, exquiſite Beauty, and wonderful Agreement, that appear in the Works of the Creation, are ſufficient to demonſtrate the infinite Wiſdom and Power of the great Creator; yet, ſome Sects among them argued themſelves out of the Belief of the very Being of a God, and fooliſhly pretended to give an Account of the original Formation of the World, by the accidental Concourſe of ſenſeleſs Atoms.

So alſo, though it be ſo natural to conclude, that the ſame wiſe and powerful Being, that at firſt made the World, may with the ſame Eaſe rule and preſide over the Work he had formed; yet, there were others among them, who, though they profeſſed in Words to own a God, whom they allowed to be the Maker of the World, yet denied his Providence and Government over it; though it is as monſtrous to deny his *Providence* as his *Being*.

THE Belief, alſo, of a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, which is the greateſt Inducement to virtuous Actions,

and

and the ſtrongeſt Encouragement to a patient Continuance in well doing; and, indeed, without which Mankind would want the moſt powerful Argument to keep them within the Bounds of their Duty, the *Heathen* World had a very imperfect and confuſed Notion of, and the wiſeſt Men among them ſpoke of it with much Uncertainty: But by the Goſpel of our Bleſſed Saviour, who *was the Light that was to come into the World*, all this Doubt is removed; in which we are told, that *God hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Aſſurance unto all Men, in that he hath raiſed him from the Dead.* SERM. XL.

AND, as the World was thus ſwallowed up with Ignorance, and involved in the Darkneſs of Error, ſo in their Converſations they practiſed all Sorts of Wickedneſs and Impiety: For as there was nothing ſo monſtrous in Belief, but there were ſome ready to ſupport it; ſo there was nothing in Practice, but ſome or other were capable of committing.

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IT is true, the Philoſophers ſaid many fine Things of *Virtue*, but that had very little Influence either upon themſelves or other Men; and it would have been ſtrange, had it been otherwiſe: Becauſe, by their laying the Foundation of Virtue only in the Nature and Reaſon of Perſons and Things, without conſidering God as the Author of them, or themſelves under any Obligation to comply with them, in Expectation of being acceptable to him, by obeying his Will, it could have no Force to regulate the Practice of Mankind, becauſe few Men would be able to ſee the moral Fitneſs, by a natural Weakneſs of their Capacities; and they that did ſee it, would practiſe it no longer, than either to indulge their Vanity, or advance their Intereſt.

AND this actually was the Caſe, when our Bleſſed Saviour appeared in the World. Both the *Faith* and *Practice* of the *Gentiles* were as bad as poſſible, and, unleſs God had been pleaſed to reveal his Will, they muſt have continued in that miſerable Condition: For, how much ſoever ſome Men may cry up the Sufficiency of human Rea-

ſon

ſon to diſcover the Nature of God, and our Obligations to him; it is evident, the *Heathen* World were in ſuch Darkneſs, and their Reaſon ſo much corrupted, that it was impoſſible by any human Means to reform it. And ſo far were the Philoſophers from teaching other Men how to be *happy*, that they could not determine themſelves, wherein the *Happineſs* of *Man* conſiſted; and the Reaſon that Men now-a-days ſee clearer, and argue with more Certainty about theſe Matters, is, becauſe Revelation hath enlightened their Underſtandings, and improved their *Reaſon*: It is by the *Light* of *that*, that we ſee the Agreeableneſs of many Things to natural Reaſon, which we could never have ſo clearly diſcovered, if we had not been aſſiſted by *Revelation*.

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THEREFORE, it is very ungrateful for Men to diſown or deſpiſe that Light, to which they are ſo greatly beholden, and to argue againſt the Neceſſity of Revelation, from that very Aſſiſtance they receive from it.

ARE we then bleſſed with a clearer Knowledge of God, is his Nature and Perfections

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fections more evident to us? Let our Obedience to his Will be in Proportion to the Knowledge of it.

ALL Deficiency in our Duty now, muſt be highly criminal, becauſe we know our Maſter's Will; and if we do it not, we ought to be corrected with many Stripes. The Ignorance of the *Heathen* World might in ſome Sort be pleaded in their Favour, who might be ſaid not to have known their Lord's Will: But as their Ignorance was in great Meaſure their Crime, becauſe they might have attained, by the Light of Reaſon, and a true Uſe of their natural Faculties, to a right Knowledge of God, and their Duty to him, therefore they were ſo far inexcuſable; and as a Puniſhment for their not *caring to retain him in their Minds, God gave them over to a reprobate Mind, and they received in themſelves that Recompence of their Error that was meet.*

AND if the *Heathen* World, which had no Revelation, were without Excuſe, how much more muſt Chriſtians be blameable, who enjoy the cleareſt and moſt perfect Revelation that God ever made of his Will to Mankind, if they do not live according

to

to the Rules and Precepts of it? The Light, which Chriſtians enjoy by the Goſpel, is deſigned as ſo many Talents, which our Lord will ſtrictly call us to Account for: For *unto whom much is given, of him much will be required; and to whom he hath committed much, of him he will aſk the more.* SERM. XL.

WE have all the reaſonable Conviction of the Truth of what we are commanded to believe, that the Nature of the Thing will bear: Let, therefore, no unjuſt Prejudices againſt, or pretended Difficulties in the Chriſtian Religion leſſen your Faith, or infect your Morals. *Do but the Will of God*, and you will ſoon be ſatisfied that the *Doctrine is of him*; for it is not for Want of *Evidence*, but for Want of *Virtue*, that Men reject the Goſpel: *They believe not the Truth, becauſe they have Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs; and caſt the Word of the Lord behind them, becauſe they hate to be reformed.* This is the unhappy Cauſe of their Infidelity; their Hearts are ſet upon the ſinful Enjoyments of the preſent World, their Affections and Paſſions are biaſſed in Favour of their wicked Ways; and for that Reaſon, they are willing to ſhake off the Thoughts

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Thoughts of ſuch Truths as are contrary to their falſe Intereſts, and to turn a deaf Ear to all the Promiſes and Threatnings, the Perſuaſions and Terrors of the Goſpel.

BUT let us, my Brethren, be careful to get clear of thoſe unreaſonable Prejudices, wherewith a wicked Life is uſed to blind and enſlave us: Let us obey the Will of God, and reſolve to direct ourſelves by thoſe Rules, which he hath given us in the Goſpel to walk by, and we ſhall ſoon be convinced of the Truth of them.

IN a Word: Let that Life and Immortality, which is brought to Light by the Goſpel, ſo influence our Practice, that by well doing we may be received into Happineſs, when *God ſhall bring every Man, and every Work into Judgment, whether it be good or evil.*

SER-

SERMON XLI.

The DEFICIENCY of HUMAN REASON.

1 COR. xiii. 12.

We ſee through a Glaſs darkly.

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WHATSOEVER exalted Notions ſome Men may form of their own Reaſon, and how much ſoever they may think themſelves ſuperior to the lower Part of the Creation; yet this boaſted Superiority of Reaſon is very defective, and liable to Error and great Uncertainty.

THE wiſe and contemplative Part of the World, after all their Labour and Search for true Wiſdom, confeſs themſelves to be in the Dark; they find their Ideas of Things inadequate and obſcure, and themſelves

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selves obliged to build upon Principles, in their Reasonings, which are far from self-evident.

WHAT hath been thought Demonstration in one Age, hath been refuted and exploded in the next. And Mathematicks herself, for all her Triumph and Boast of Certainty, hath her Mysteries, which the Mathematician hath not as yet been able to explain. Nay, the meanest and most obvious Things have their dark Sides, which perplex and puzzle the clearest and most acute Understanding.

I WOULD not be thought, by this, to degrade the Privilege and Blessing of Reason, or encourage Scepticism, because we may raise Doubts and Objections in every Science, that we cannot solve: All that I design is to shew, that the *Reasoner of this World* ought to have humble Conceptions of his own Abilities, and not peremptorily conclude every Thing false, that he cannot comprehend or demonstrate. For as the Wisdom of God in the Formation of the Eye, hath so contrived it, for the Admission of external Objects, that the Images of them should neither be too great

great or too ſmall, either of which would render the Eye uſeleſs; ſo, without doubt, he hath made our Underſtanding of ſuch a Size, as he thought moſt proper for our Neceſſities and our Happineſs. Was our Knowledge, for Inſtance, as clear, and quick, and comprehenſive, as the ſuppoſed Intuition of Angels, what Advantage would it be to us, while our Souls are encumbered with, and confined in, theſe dull and inactive Bodies? We ſhould only be in the miſerable Condition of Priſoners, who, from their Goals having various delightful Proſpects, find themſelves ſo much the more ſenſible of their own Confinement.

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BUT without enquiring any further into the Reaſon, why our Knowledge is bounded within ſuch narrow Limits, I ſhall conſider Mankind, as they are; and ſhew, that *we ſee through a Glaſs darkly.*

THAT there is a God, is ſo plain and obvious to every rational Being, that the Holy Scriptures very emphatically make Folly and Atheiſm ſynonymous Terms: *The Fool hath ſaid in his Heart, there is no God*; and, indeed, the Philoſopher hath no greater Demonſtration of his Exiſtence,

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from his metaphyſical Concluſions, than the Illiterate from a Contemplation of the World about them. *For*, as St. *Paul* tells us, *the inviſible Things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the Things that are made*[a]. Whole Nature gives in a full and convincing Evidence of her Creator. We can turn our Eyes upon no Part of the Univerſe, but we meet with ten thouſand Inſtances of Wonder and Admiration. Every Thing we ſee, hear, taſte, ſmell, or feel, manifeſts the Wiſdom and Being of a God.

WHAT plain and undeniable Arguments do the Frame and Structure of human Bodies afford us for his Exiſtence? Every Part of which is a Compoſition of Wonders. If we look up to the Heavens, he is there; the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars inform us of him: And if we go down to the Sea, even the Storms and Tempeſts point him out.

WHAT Fields for Contemplation are before us, if we had Time to deſcend to Particulars? How ſtrongly does a God appear in the minuteſt Part of his Works? Nay,

[a] *Rom.* i. 20.

Nay, even in the Formation of the moſt noxious and ſeemingly unprofitable Part of the Creation, we meet him, and the very *Hiſs* of the *Serpent* ſounds it in our Ears. SERM. XLI.

THUS far does the viſible Creation point out to us the Being of a God: And it is alſo undeniably certain, that this Being, that we call God, muſt be eternal and independent; becauſe it would have been impoſſible for any Thing ever to have been, if we can ſuppoſe a Time, when nothing was; for out of nothing, nothing can proceed. And he muſt be independent of all other Things, becauſe being before all Things, by the Eternity of his Nature, he muſt, conſequently, be independent of them.

THUS far we have clear Comprehenſions of theſe Attributes; but, yet, how an eternal Duration can be already paſt, is what we are at a Loſs to conceive; and, when, with the Metaphyſician, we allow, that Eternity is not made up of Parts, our Ideas are extremely confuſed, who have no poſitive ones of Duration, but by comparing the different Lengths of Succeſſion.

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IN relation to the *Omnipreſence* of God, the Metaphyſicians argue juſtly, when they ſay, that God muſt be *infinite* or *omnipreſent*, becauſe he can be limited by no other Being, as to his Exiſtence; for that would be to make him dependent upon ſome other Being, if he could be limited to any particular Place; which is a Contradiction: Or, if he was *finite*, he would want ſome Perfection; for, as to be finite is an Imperfection in us, it muſt, conſequently, be ſo in the firſt Being. But as he is the ſupreme Cauſe of the Exiſtence of all other Beings, ſo he muſt exiſt in the moſt perfect Manner of exiſting; and as it is the moſt perfect Manner of exiſting, to exiſt in all Places, therefore, God muſt be infinite and omnipreſent.

BUT, yet, when we come to explain to ourſelves the Manner of his *infinite Preſence*, we are brought into inexplicable Difficulties. How God does exiſt in every Place, we know not; for, if Matter is a ſolid extended Subſtance, it muſt occupy or fill ſome Space; and if ſo, it muſt exclude every Thing elſe from that Portion of Space, where it is extended.

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To ſay, in Anſwer to this, that God, as an immaterial Being, pervades Matter, and ſo fills every Place, is an unintelligible Term: For either it implies, that the Solidity and Extenſion of all Matter is imaginary; which is a Contradiction to all our Senſes; or that the Solidity and Extenſion of Matter is not ſufficient to exclude an immaterial Being, from filling the ſame Place where it is extended; which we cannot comprehend. SERM. XLI.

INFINITY of Space, alſo, is allowed to be a very good Argument for the Infinity of God; becauſe, as Space cannot be conceived any otherwiſe, than as neceſſarily exiſting, and, as God, on whom all other Beings depend, muſt exiſt by the ſame Neceſſity of Nature; therefore, wherever Space is found, there God muſt alſo be. Yet, perhaps, it may not be a Contradiction, to have an Idea of Space, even, upon Suppoſition that the Being of God was excluded from it; for, as his Eſſence is unknown to us, it cannot be ſo neceſſarily connected with our Idea of Space, as in our Thoughts never to be disjoined from it.

IF to this it be anſwered, that God's neceſſary Exiſtence will always determine

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him to be preſent every where, even could we ſuppoſe him abſent from any particular Portion of Space; becauſe, whatſoever is ſelf-exiſtent, or whoſe Nature it is to be, it will equally be its Nature to be in one Place as well as another; and if ſo, then he muſt be every where: May it not be replied, that, though the neceſſary Exiſtence of God will make it neceſſary for him to be where he is, yet, it does not follow, that Infinity is ſo connected with neceſſary Exiſtence, that to deny the one, is to deſtroy the other? Becauſe, to ſuppoſe God not to be, is, indeed, to deſtroy his neceſſary Exiſtence; whereas to ſuppoſe him finite, may not. For to be finite, no more makes him to depend upon finite Space, than his being infinite, makes him to depend upon infinite Space.

IN ſhort, how God exiſts, we know not; we perceive by Reaſon, that he muſt exiſt, but we know no more: Infinity is above our finite Comprehenſions; for what we know, his Omnipreſence may be his infinite Knowledge only, and his actual and perſonal Exiſtence may not be infinite: *For, as touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; for Clouds and Darkneſs are round*

about him, though Mercy and Judgment are the Habitation of his Seat. SERM. XLI.

How greatly, alſo, are we loſt in Contemplation, when we meditate on the *Knowledge* of God! How infinitely does his Power of knowing confound all our vain Attempts to explore, and how impoſſible is it to underſtand in what Reſpect, *Paſt*, *Preſent*, and *To-come*, may differ in the Divine Mind!

HE muſt, indeed, as he is a moſt perfect Being, have all poſſible Degrees of Knowledge; and, as it is an avowed Imperfection *to know in Part*, ſuch an Imperfection cannot be aſcribed to him: Yet, how God can know the Actions of Men, who are free Beings, even before the Men themſelves exiſt, we cannot poſſibly conceive, who have no other Way of knowing Things, but by the Aſſiſtance of our Senſes, by Time, Study, and Obſervation.

WE have not only a partial Knowledge of the Being and Attributes of God, but even in the Revelation of his Will, wherein many Things are cleared up, which were above the Diſcovery of unaſſiſted Reaſon, he hath been pleaſed to hide many Things

SERM. XLI. in Part, from us: *For we walk by Faith, and not by Sight.*

How many Difficulties, for Inſtance, are there in the Reſurrection of the ſame Body, if the Arguments, which ſome Men have made uſe of, are of that Importance, that they have imagined them to be? If the Neceſſity of the Riſing of the ſame Body, appears from the Juſtice of its being rewarded or puniſhed according to its paſt Actions; may it not be objected, that the Body is not capable of being rewarded or puniſhed in a ſtrict Senſe, that it is only a dull unthinking Subſtance, modified in a particular Manner, ſo that it may be a fit Inſtrument for the Soul to perform its Operations in, and, conſequently, that it is not ſo neceſſary, in that Senſe, that it ſhould be the ſame.

BESIDES, that it is in a continual Flux, and Alteration; that we are not the ſame Men in any two Moments of our Lives, but are perpetually throwing off ſome Parts of us, and receiving others. Again,

THERE are many Bodies worn out and emaciated through the Unhappineſs of long Diſtempers, or the natural Infirmities of Old

Old Age: Others are naturally deformed, and maimed from unknown Accidents in the Womb, which would be improper to be admitted into Heaven, where all Imperfections both of Mind and Body will be done away. And there are many Parts of the human Body, that are now in this Life of great Service, which will be uſeleſs in the other World, where there will be no proper Objects for their Entertainment. SERM. XLI.

Now, theſe are ſome of the Difficulties, that will always be ſtarted, when Men attempt to explain the *Modus* of the Reſurrection of the ſame Body: And yet there is nothing in all this, that can with any Reaſon weaken our Belief. For the Propoſition of a Reſurrection, when *we ſhall all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,* is plainly revealed; and the Truth of it muſt reſt upon the Certainty of its being a divine Revelation, the Reality of which being proved, our Ignorance of the *Modus* of it ought not to be at all regarded.

IF,

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IF, therefore, Men, inſtead of troubling themſelves in Inquiries of this Nature, which are more curious than uſeful, and are what they can never arrive at any End of, would endeavour by a pious and virtuous Behaviour to prepare againſt that great Day, that they may be able to give a good Account of themſelves, it would be of more Service to them, than all the *ſpeculative Knowledge* of the *Manner* in which their *Bodies* were to *riſe*.

As we know only in Part, concerning the Manner of the *Reſurrection*, ſo we are greatly at a Loſs, when we meditate upon the Bleſſed *Trinity*. We have, indeed, the infallible Certainty of the Scripture, that *the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghoſt God, and yet, that there are not three Gods, but one God*; but how they are ſo, we ſhall never be able to conceive, till the Eſſence of God is made known to us: For we are not able *to ſearch into the deep Things of God*, but muſt be content *to ſee through a Glaſs darkly*, till the Time comes, to know God perfectly, and to ſee him as he is. This Incapacity of human Nature to ſearch into the Myſteries of God, the

firſt

first and best Christians were so sensible of, SERM. XLI.
that for near two Ages of the Church, they made use of no settled Terms in the Doctrine of the Trinity: But being more intent upon Piety and a good Life, than in the Niceties and Forms of Speech, they believed the *Trinity* in general, upon the Credit of God's Word, without giving themselves the Trouble of forming any useless Explications of it. And happy had it been for the Christian Church, if Men could have been content to have relied upon the Veracity of God, in relation to the *Trinity*. For human Reason, when it wades out of its Depth, meets with nothing but Uncertainty, and Danger; and the many Absurdities and Extravagances Men have fallen into, in their vain Attempts to explain this inexplicable Mystery, is an instructive Admonition to warn us, how dangerous it is, to pretend to know above what we are able.

IF the Reasoner of this World objects, that he is not obliged to give his Assent to any Thing he does not understand, it may be answered, he is not, to Propositions of an indifferent Nature: But in religious Pro-

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Propoſitions it is otherwiſe; for here, if we are ſure, that the Propoſition is *revealed*, and that this *Revelation* came from God, it is no Matter whether we underſtand the *Manner* of it, or no: The Truth of the Propoſition depending upon its Certainty that it came from God, and not at all in our Knowledge of its *Modus*. And as we have the ſtrongeſt Proof of the divine Authority of thoſe Books, and as this Propoſition is there plainly contained, there is all the Reaſon in the World to believe it.

BESIDES, was there not as plain a Teſtimony in the Holy Scriptures for the *Divinity* of the *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, as the Nature of the Thing will allow, it would have been incredible to ſuppoſe, that the firſt Chriſtians ſhould all believe it, who could not be miſtaken in a Thing of that Conſequence.

SOME ſpeculative Opinions, upon which Salvation did not at all depend, may eaſily be ſuppoſed to be brought from the Schools of the Philoſophers, where a great many Chriſtians, before they were converted, had been educated: But, to imagine them to

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err, in a Thing ſo material as the *Trinity*, is as irrational to ſuppoſe, as to think they might be miſtaken in the Goſpel itſelf. SERM. XLI.

WHATSOEVER Difficulties, therefore, may be met with, when Men pry into theſe unconceivable Myſteries of divine Revelation, they ſhould have Recourſe to *Humility*, and reflect upon the Weakneſs of human Reaſon, and conſider how unable it is to give a juſt Account of the moſt ordinary Works of Creation: And, conſequently, if nothing is to be allowed of, but what they can fully comprehend, they muſt not only ſtrike God out of the Liſt of Beings, but make a Blank of the whole Univerſe; ſince we cannot perfectly conceive the meaneſt Inſect, or the Growth or Fabrick of the ſmalleſt Spire of Graſs. For, though all our Senſes are continually employed by Matter, and every Thing we ſee and touch is Matter; yet we have little or no Knowledge of it, but from its ſecondary Qualities, which act upon our Senſes, and diſtinguiſh one Part of Matter from another, by thoſe outward ſenſible Effects. But what it is in itſelf, we are ignorant of: For, though, by the Help of Glaſſes,

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Glaſſes, we can diſcover ſomething more exactly than our Forefathers; yet, *now, we ſee through a Glaſs darkly*, and may properly be ſaid to know only the Out-lines of the Creation.

LET, therefore, the Senſe of our Blindneſs make us acquieſce, and ſubmit our Reaſon to the Obedience of Faith. Let thoſe Proofs, which God was pleaſed to give of the Revelation of his Will, be received without Cavil, leſt we become guilty of the ſame Fault with the Phariſees, whom our Saviour called a wicked and an adulterous Generation, becauſe they demanded a Sign, after ſo many convincing Proofs, which he had given them, of being ſent from God.

IN a Word: Let our Practice be agreeable to that Rule of Behaviour, which the Scripture hath preſcribed us. And this is the Inference that St. *Paul* draws from the Words of the Text: *And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, theſe three; but the greateſt of theſe is Charity:* Without which, all our Knowledge will be in vain; nay, even the Beſtowing all we have on the Poor,

and

and laying down our Life in Defence of the Goſpel, will loſe their Reward. SERM. XLI.

BUT Charity will never fail: The *practical Duties* of Religion are the Keys, that will open the Doors of Heaven to us, at the laſt Day; and, then, as we ſhall find, how much Men were miſtaken in many of the Speculations, that with ſo much Warmth they preſcribed to the World as Truth, ſo we ſhall have the ſolid Comfort of knowing, that a ſincere Practice of Virtue and Piety will compenſate for all thoſe Errors, to which the Infirmity of human Nature, and unavoidable Prejudices, ſo zealouſly attached us.

To conclude: Let us beg of God, that he would lighten our Darkneſs, that we may both perceive and know what Things we ought to do, and alſo may have Grace and Power faithfully to fulfil the ſame, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XLII.

On the NATURE of REPENTANCE.

HAGGAI i. 5.

Consider your Ways.

SERM. XLII. FROM these Words I propose to consider the Nature and Efficacy of Repentance, together with the Steps that naturally lead us to it.

REPENTANCE is the great Blessing and Privilege of Mankind, by which God hath vouchsafed to admit us into his Favour, though we have offended him by our manifold Transgressions. And it is not only a bare Sorrow for Sin, but an actual Amending and Forsaking the Fault repented of, attended with such a Disposition of Mind, as shews forth the Sincerity of its Repentance by grateful Expressions of universal Obedience.

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THE firſt Step towards Repentance is *Conſideration*, by which I mean a ſerious and intenſe Application of our Minds to take a juſt and impartial View of ourſelves, and of ſuch Things as moſt concern us, to the End that we may govern ourſelves, and direct our Determinations accordingly: In Conſequence of which, in our Reflections, we muſt not ſuffer ourſelves to be carried away with the Prejudice of Senſe, nor confine our Thoughts to ſuch Things as are preſented to us by it; but we muſt look round us, and conſider the Nature, Tendency, and all the Circumſtances of Things. SERM. XLII.

NOR muſt we ſuffer ourſelves to be overborn by the Preſence and Importunity of ſenſual Objects, or by Hurry of our Paſſions; but we muſt give ourſelves Leiſure, calmly and maturely to underſtand the juſt Nature of Things, and never determine till we have the plaineſt Reaſon to incline us to Action. We muſt turn our Eyes inwardly upon ourſelves, and comment upon our own Actions.

IT is upon the Want of ſuch Conſideration, that God lays the Blame of the

SERM. XLII.

Jews Deſtruction: *My People*, ſays he, *will not conſider.*

AND in the New Teſtament, in the Parable of the Sower, *the good Ground*[a], that had Depth of Earth, repreſents thoſe Perſons that ſeriouſly and juſtly conſider.

AND, indeed, *Repentance* being nothing leſs than the Change of a Man's whole Life, the entering into a Courſe of ſevere and conſtant Virtue, the ſubduing our Paſſions, the denying ourſelves ſome of the moſt pleaſant Gratifications of Fleſh and Blood; it is abſolutely neceſſary, that whoſoever goes through with it, do maturely conſider the Enterprize, and call in all his Force to perform it. Thus holy *David* ſays, *I thought upon my Ways, and turned my Feet to thy Precepts.* But that which brings Men to this ſerious Temper of Mind, is, uſually, *Affliction*; and probably it was upon this Account, that our Saviour [b] pronounceth the *Poor*, and *thoſe that mourn, bleſſed*, becauſe Adverſities diſpoſe Men to Conſideration and Repentance; whereas the Rich have ſo many Temptations to perſiſt in their Courſe, that

[a] *Matt.* xiii. [b] *Matt.* v. 3, 4.

that our Saviour pronounceth it very hard for *a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* SERM. XLII.

ADVERSITY frequently humbles, where no Kindneſs or Mercy could ſoften into Obedience. And *David* confeſſeth of himſelf, *That before he was afflicted he went aſtray, but thereby he had learnt to keep God's Commandments.* A conſtant Gale of Proſperity carries Men with too full Sail to be controlled by Counſel; it preſents them with too many Temptations not to be eaſily reſiſted, miniſters to their Preſumption, that either they are good enough already, becauſe they have ſo many Arguments of the Divine Favour, or, at leaſt, that he overlooks their Miſcarriages; ſo that their Conſcience is ſtifled, and cannot exert itſelf, till ſome ſurpriſing Calamity overtakes them, that makes it reſume its Power. For Afflictions, if they do not make Men good, yet, by making them uneaſy in their Sins, they diſpoſe them towards Repentance: Whereas Proſperity raiſes the Paſſions, and depreſſes the Conſcience; upon which Account, it is the uſual Method of Divine Wiſdom to bring Men to a Senſe of themſelves

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ſelves by Affliction, which ſoftens their obdurate Hearts, abates their Pride, and brings them to a cool and deliberate Temper. *If they be bound* (ſays *Elihu* in *Job*) *in Fetters, and be holden in Cords of Affliction; then he ſheweth them their Work, and their Tranſgreſſions, that they have exceeded; he openeth alſo their Ear to Diſcipline, and commandeth that they return from Iniquity*[a].

FROM all which we may conclude, that it is not from an arbitrary and cruel Diſpoſition in God, that he ſends Calamities upon the Sons of Men; but that they are Proofs of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs to them: Afflictions being often the only Way to bring them to Conſideration and Repentance.

THE next Step to a ſerious Conſideration of the Errors of our Ways, muſt be a deliberate and determined Reſolution to amend our former Follies, by a future Zeal and Diligence. There have been many Men, who, when they have found themſelves diſappointed in the Pleaſures, that they promiſed themſelves in the Enjoyment of their Sins, or, perhaps, ſurpriſed with

[a] *Job* xxxvi. 8, 9, 10.

with ſome ſudden Calamity, which they did not expect, have reſolved to leave off their wicked Courſe of Life; but, for Want of conſidering Things well, have returned to their Sins, and like old Friends, that have had a ſudden Quarrel, have ſhook Hands, and been as gracious as before. SERM. XLII.

BUT the true Reſolver muſt conſider all the Pleaſures and Advantages of Sin, on the one Hand, and all the Difficulties and Self-Denial of Virtue on the other; he muſt reflect upon the Impediments as well as Encouragments he ſhall meet with, keeping in his Mind the Advice of the Son of *Sirach*, *My Son, if thou come to ſerve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation* [a].

IT is for Want of ſufficient Conſideration, that Men have ſo frequently fallen off from hopeful Beginnings, and have brought themſelves to ſuch ſhocking Apoſtaſies, as have happened. It was the Want of a thorough Deliberation, that made St. *Peter* ſo ſhamefully deny his Maſter, after his great Boaſting to die with him. He had not conſidered what might be the

[a] *Eccluſ.* ii. 1.

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Conſequence, and therefore, all his ſudden Heat and Bravery came to nothing. And in him we have a ſtanding Example of human Frailty, and ſee the Neceſſity of Deliberation to confirm our Reſolutions. And for Want of this, Men have no ſettled Principles, nothing fixed and conſtant to govern themſelves by. But, the true Penitent muſt thoroughly reſolve with himſelf to go through with his Work, and determine that nothing ſhall withdraw him from his Purpoſe, or break his Reſolutions.

AFTER which, the next Thing neceſſary, is immediately to ſet about what he is reſolved upon: For he underſtandeth neither the Evil, nor the Danger of Sin, much leſs hath any Senſe of Virtue, that can find in his Heart to adjourn the Reſolution of caſting off the former, and applying himſelf to the latter. For, where the Miſchief is intolerable on the one Hand, and the Good and Happineſs the moſt unſpeakable and higheſt that can be, on the other, there can be neither Wiſdom, nor Safety in any other Courſe, than that which *Solomon* directs: *Whatſoever thy Hand findeth to do, do it with thy Might; for there is no Work,*

Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wiſdom in the Grave, whither thou goeſt[a]. When once Death hath cloſed our Eyes, *the Night cometh when no Man can work.* And, who, that underſtandeth the Frailty of his own Body, and the many Accidents that it is ſubject to, can be ſure of another Moment's Continuation? Or, if that ſhould be continued, who ſhall ſecure us, that a Day of Grace ſhall laſt as long as we ſhall live? God may withdraw his Grace, which we abuſe, and then, as we ſhall not be in a State of Repentance, ſo neither ſhall we be Objects of God's Mercy. SERM. XLII.

WHEREFORE, the true Penitent will dally no longer, in a Matter of ſuch Importance, but will immediately put his Reſolutions into Execution, and ſerve God by a faithful Obedience to all his Commands; without preſuming to pick and cull what are moſt agreeable to him, and by a punctual Conformity to them, hope to excuſe himſelf, if he ſhould tranſgreſs in the others. And whoſoever deſigns ſincerely to ſerve God, muſt omit nothing that he knows to be his Duty, nor diſpenſe with him-

[a] *Eccleſ.* ix. 10.

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himſelf in the Practice of any Thing that he is certain is a Sin. For God hath a juſt Title to all our Service, and he is jealous of his Honour, and will not be ſerved deceitfully, or by Halves. He will admit of no Rival, he perfectly underſtands all our private Reſerves, and will ſeverely puniſh the Hypocrite.

IF we ſerve him faithfully, he is both able and ready to reward us; and that, as much beyond our Deſerts, as above our Imaginations. Though we have rebelled againſt him, and oppoſed his Will; though we have liſted into the Service of his profeſſed Enemy, and fought under his Banner; yet, if we truly repent, we may depend upon Forgiveneſs; for God is our Father, and he will do nothing that is hard or cruel to us: And, as he is infinitely good, therefore, every Thing that is good may be expected from him. For what can tempt an infinitely perfect Being to be cruel and inexorable? He hath all Fulneſs in himſelf; and, therefore, he can envy nothing, he cannot hate any Thing that he hath made; he pities thoſe who are below him, and delights to communicate himſelf

himſelf to ſuch as need him. It is through Weakneſs, Fear, Want and Impotency, that Men are cruel and envious; but God is ſelf-ſufficient, he is above all Danger, he hath nothing to fear, for nothing can hurt him; he wants nothing, for all Things are from him; he cannot be tempted to take Advantage againſt his Creatures, or delight in their Miſery, ſince the only End he had in their Creation, was to make them happy. There is no Paſſion nor Revenge in the Almighty, he doth nothing with Intention to hurt or grieve us; he always deſigns us the greateſt Good, and is, in all his Actions, agreeable to the Goodneſs and Benignity of his own Nature.

THUS we ſee, that the very Perfections of the Divine Nature give us all the Aſſurance that can be deſired, that our Repentance will be available with him. But, for a further Proof of this, Repentance was the great Doctrine the Son of God came to proclaim, and to confirm by Miracles, and to procure Acceptance to, by his Death and Sacrifice; ſo that, if God had not had great Compaſſion for Mankind,

and

SERM. XLII. and did not design to accept them upon Repentance, he never would have given his own Son to be a Sacrifice for Sin. After such a Proof, no one can suspect, that God is indifferent whether Men be saved or not, or that he is implacable to those, whose Nature his Son assumed; or, that his Son hath not the greatest Affection for us, who not only lived, but died for us.

WHEREFORE, let us but endeavour to render ourselves Objects of his Mercy, and we may depend upon his Goodness.

ANOTHER Motive to Repentance is, that it is not impossible for a Sinner to retrieve himself, and take up a new Course of Life. Indeed, it is very difficult to do so; which made the Prophet *Jeremiah* say, *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also do Good, that are accustomed to do Evil*[a]: Yet, for all this, though Men have weakened their Powers, by a long Custom of sinning, there is Hope in the God of *Israel*, and his Hand is not shortened that it cannot save; his Holy Spirit can awaken those Powers, that were dead in Sleep, and his Grace

[a] *Jeremiah* xiii. 23.

Grace make Men oppoſe their old Cuſtoms, and begin new ones. Thus St. *Paul*, from *a Blaſphemer, and a Perſecutor, and the chief of Sinners*, became an exemplary *Chriſtian*, and a zealous *Apoſtle, and Preacher of the Doctrine, which before he deſtroyed.* SERM. XLII.

BUT the repenting Sinner will not only find it poſſible to alter his Courſe of Life, but he will find it eaſier than he imagined.

THE Path of Virtue, though it be not ſo much frequented as the Road of Wickedneſs, is not ſo ſad and uncomfortable as is imagined. The virtuous Man is not abridged of any Delight, nor any of his Paſſions denied their proper Satisfaction. Religion impoſes no harſh and grievous Things upon him; but, on the contrary, by being religious, he conſults his own Intereſt and Happineſs: For by this he moderates his Appetites and Paſſions, gets the better of himſelf, eſtabliſhes the preſent Peace of his Mind, and lays a Foundation for future Happineſs.

BESIDES, the Way of Virtue is eaſy, becauſe it hath the Approbation of our own Reaſon, and the Suffrage of our Conſcience; its Laws tend to promote the Happineſs of

SERM. XLII. Society, are agreeable to our own Natures, and as fit for us to conſent to, as for God to enact.

ALL the Oppoſition, that the Devil or our own carnal Paſſions can make, will have no Power, if we ſtand firm to ourſelves. Beſides, all the Importunities of Fleſh and Blood will, the more they are oppoſed, grow ſenſibly the weaker: And as for the Temptations of Satan, if we *reſiſt him, he will flee from us.* For, as nothing more encourages his Attempts upon us, than our Irreſolution and feeble Oppoſition; ſo, if he finds us prepared againſt his Aſſaults, and that he cannot corrupt us, he will leave off his Deſigns upon us.

BUT that we may not fall, the Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit will peculiarly direct and enligten thoſe that are truly ſincere; if we reſiſt not his Motions, he will learn us to overcome: *For greater is he, that is in us, than he that is in the World*; and it is our great Encouragement, *to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling, becauſe God worketh in us, to will and to do, of his good Pleaſure.* All our Danger lies in our Want of Reſolution; if we have but that,

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we ſhall find all our Diſcouragements va- SERM. XLII.
niſh.

BUT, however, let the Difficulties be ever ſo great, Repentance is abſolutely neceſſary; therefore, our Wiſdom will be beſt ſhewn by a ready Compliance.

THAT Men cannot become happy without the Practice of Virtue, and that Sinners cannot become capable of Pardon, but by forſaking their Sins, is evident from the natural Notions we have of God, by the Light of Reaſon. But the Goſpel more clearly ſets forth the Neceſſity of Repentance and Amendment, and the Impoſſibility of obtaining Pardon without it; becauſe God does not think fit, even with it, to manifeſt his Mercy to Sinners directly, but through the Interceſſion of Chriſt, and by the Merits of his Death. In this Revelation of his Will, God expreſsly commands us to *abſtain from all Evil, to walk worthy of the Vocation to which we are called:* And he threatens, expreſsly, his *Wrath from Heaven, againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrigteouſneſs of Men.*

ST. *Paul* tells us, that *God winked at the former Times of Ignorance, but now he commandeth*

SERM. XLII. *mandeth all Men every where to repent; becauſe he hath appointed a Day, in which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs by that Man, whom he hath ordained* (to be their Judge) *whereof he hath given Aſſurance to all Men, in that he hath raiſed him from the Dead*[a].

THE Doctrine of Repentance is thus laid down in Scripture: And the Neceſſity of it may appear further, from the Frequency of our Failings. The moſt righteous Man offends every Day; and it is great Wiſdom to provide, that we may have no long Accounts to make up, leſt being overtaken by ſome ſudden Sickneſs, we may not be able to call our Sins to Remembrance, and to exerciſe a particular Repentance for them.

ABOVE all, let us not content ourſelves with vain Reſolutions of *future* Repentance: But, *be ye always ready, for in ſuch an Hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh; and bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing.*

THEY who think, that it will be Time enough hereafter to repent and turn from their

[a] *Acts* xvii. 30, 31.

their evil Ways, ought to remember, that, by Continuance in Sin, Men grow more and more hardened, and the Heart is more enſlaved by wicked Practices: Their Conſciences become ſtupid and inſenſible, and their Judgment incapable of diſtinguiſhing Things rightly; and, what is worſe than all this, the Spirit of God departs from them, and that Grace and Aſſiſtance, without which they can do nothing, leaves them to themſelves. SERM. XLII.

BESIDES, was this not the Caſe, the Change of our Mind is one of the moſt difficult Things in Nature, and requires the ſtrongeſt Reſolution to compleat. If, therefore, we would be good, and mean to be happy, it behoves us to embrace all Opportunities of reforming our Lives and Hearts, and to proceed with all Expedition. For, if we put it off to another Day, we ſhall have the ſame Hardſhips to deter us, and the ſame Temptations to allure us from our Duty. It is neceſſary for us to repent ſome Time; and the ſooner we do it, the better. The Pleaſure it will yield us will be exceeding great, and the Mind will conceive an uncommon Satisfaction, in ſuch

SERM. XLII.

such a Triumph over the Appetites and Paſſions.

IN a Word: Let us take Care of miſpending our preſent Time, leſt God be provoked to deprive us of the future.

AND, as we muſt give a ſtrict Account of all our Actions here, *Let your Loins be girded about, and your Lamps burning, and ye yourſelves like Men that wait for the Lord*; and, according to the Advice of the Son of *Sirach* [a], *make no Tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from Day to Day: For ſuddenly ſhall the Wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy Security thou ſhalt be deſtroyed, and periſh in the Day of Vengeance.*

[a] *Eccluſ.* v. 7.

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SERMON XLIII.

God's Readineſs to receive Returning Sinners.

1 JOHN i. 9.

If we confeſs our Sins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins.

THE Mercy and Compaſſion of God is ſuch, that though he receives no Profit or Increaſe of Happineſs by Mens Obedience to his Laws, yet he rewards our Obedience to them, as if he were the better for it; and, when we have offended him by an actual Tranſgreſſion, he receives us again to Favour, upon the humble Confeſſion of our Fault, and full Reſolution to do ſo no more. He loves us with all the Tenderneſs of a Father, and hath ſuch a Concern for our Good and Happineſs, that he cannot ſee the leaſt Inclinations in us to return to our

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Duty, but he hath Compaſſion upon us, his Heart is diſſolved into Kindneſs, and his Arms open to receive and embrace us.

THUS the Prophet *Jeremiah*, when he had ſtrongly deſcribed the Beginnings of Repentance in the Hearts of the Children of *Iſrael*, introduceth God taking Notice and expreſſing his Compaſſions for them: *Is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleaſant Child? For ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill; therefore, my Bowels are troubled for him; I will ſurely have Mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord*[a].

WHAT an Encouragement is this for Sinners to return to him, when they are ſure of a gracious Look, and a friendly Reception! *For, like as a Father pitieth his own Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* He eaſily relents and takes Compaſſion on us, he hath the ſtrongeſt Propenſion to do us good, which is ſure to diſcover itſelf upon the leaſt Opportunity we give him to expreſs it.

BUT, now I am talking of the Divine Compaſſion, you muſt not underſtand by this, as if God felt any Pain or Trouble, upon

[a] *Jer.* xxxi. 18, 19, 20.

upon the Account of his Concern for us; for his Perfections will not admit of that. But, God is pleaſed to repreſent himſelf in this Manner, that we might be encouraged to addreſs him, and be aſſured that he is inclined to do us good. Serm. XLIII.

Nay, he is not implacable towards the very worſt of Men; he is ſenſible whereof they are made, he knows the Power of Example, and the Prejudices of Education, and conſiders the Fallibility of human Nature; and, whilſt there are any Hopes remaining of their Recovery, will bear with them, and promote and encourage the leaſt Deſigns of Goodneſs in them. He pities thoſe he cannot love, and loves thoſe that have Compaſſion on themſelves, and delights in thoſe that love him. And that they may not want Aſſiſtance in doing their Duty, he ſends down his Holy Spirit to ſupport and direct them. For, though God be the *High and Lofty One, inhabiting Eternity*, yet he neither envies, nor grudges Mens Happineſs; and though he *dwells in the high and lofty Place*, yet, *to this Man will* he *look, that is of a broken and contrite Spirit:* And he

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will be ſo far from repulſing his Endeavours of aſcending up to him, that he reaches out a Hand of Mercy to pull him up to himſelf. In the Language of *Iſaiah*, *He will feed his Flock like a Shepherd; he will gather the Lambs with his Arms, and carry them in his Boſom*[a]. God will not only receive Men upon their Return to him, but he invites and draws them to himſelf: Inſtead of hardening them, he allures them by his Promiſes, calls upon them by his Word, melts them by his Kindneſs, and works upon them by his Spirit. And,

WHEN they ſincerely return to their Duty, he will not upbraid them with their paſt Actions, or reflect upon them for their former Diſobedience: *All the Sins that they have committed, ſhall not once be mentioned againſt them; but in the Righteouſneſs that they have done, they ſhall live.* But, to be more particular:

GOD, that he might encourage us to Repentance, hath exempted no Sin, that we may be guilty of, from Pardon, though the Offence may be attended with the moſt aggravating Circumſtances, and even often repeated.

[a] *Iſaiah* xl. 11.

repeated. For God doth not act with us, as we act with one another. Our Paſſions are eaſily raiſed and inflamed, and the Provocation too great for us to be able to forgive: But God's *Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as our Ways.* He hath no Paſſion or Revenge, he ſeeks only the Good of his Creatures; and if, at laſt, they render themſelves Objects of his Compaſſion, and capable of his Favour, he hath gained his Purpoſe. Beſides, as he hath made it our Duty, that, as often as our Brother offends againſt us, and repents, ſo often we ſhould forgive him; he will never be out-done by his Creatures, in ſhewing Mercy, which is the moſt glorious of all his Attributes. SERM. XLIII.

NOR, when he hath forgiven us, will he ever depart from it, unleſs we offend again. He will never upbraid us with our former Follies, but bury all our Tranſgreſſions againſt him in Oblivion. Men, indeed, frequently pardon, till they have an Opportunity to revenge; but God is not of ſuch a vindictive Nature, nor need he conceal his Anger, becauſe he can execute it whenſoever he pleaſes: But he is a

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God of Mercy and Truth; he pardons abſolutely the ſincere Penitent, and whoſoever is ſuch, may depend upon him with the greateſt Confidence and Security.

AND what a happy Situation is this, for a Man to have his Sins forgiven, and his Deformities no more imputed to him! What a Chearfulneſs muſt ſuch a Reflection inſpire him with, and how eaſily muſt he bear all the Calamities that can befal him in this World, when he conſiders that he hath made his Peace with God! Whilſt, on the contrary, how miſerable muſt a Man be, when he knows that his Maker is at Enmity with him, and his Conſcience upbraids him with the ſad Remembrance of his Sins, and terrifies him with the fearful Expectation of the Wrath to come! All the Pleaſures in the World muſt be flat and inſipid to ſuch an one, till by Repentance he alleviates his Trouble, and abates the Anguiſh of his Conſcience; and then he may ſay to himſelf, *Be of good Chear, thy Sins are forgiven thee.* But, ſince God is ſo good to forgive us our Sins, it ſhould raiſe in us the greateſt Admiration of his infinite Goodneſs, beget in

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us the moſt amiable Notions of him, and provoke us to love him with all our Hearts. Every Attribute of the Divine Being is amiable and lovely, but his Goodneſs in forgiving us our Sins the more affects us, becauſe he ſeems not to conſider himſelf, but us only, in the Diſpenſations of his Mercy. Serm. XLIII.

The Conſideration, alſo, of the Divine Mercy and Goodneſs, ſhould urge us on to imitate him, by being merciful to our Fellow Creatures. Our Saviour preſſes ſuch Behaviour upon us: *Be ye merciful, as your Father in Heaven is merciful.* And it is ſtrange that Men, who are ſuch great Offenders themſelves, and who ſtand in Need of the infinite Mercy of God, ſhould ever be cruel and unforgiving towards others. Shall God conſider our Infirmities, and ſhall not we overlook and pardon the Faults of our offending Brother? And how dare we wiſh that to be done for us, which we will not do to others? If God was extreme to mark what we have done amiſs, none of us could be ſaved: And, therefore, let us never dare to be rigorous towards our Neigh-

SERM. XLIII. bour, when we are ſuch Debtors to the Divine Mercy.

ABOVE all, let the Conſideration of God's Goodneſs to us, in his Willingneſs to pardon our Sins, draw us to Repentance; remembering how gracious a Father we grieve, while we are deſtroying ourſelves by our wicked Behaviour; how he longs for our Return, and what ineſtimable Benefits we ſhall receive in returning to our Obedience.

FOR no ſooner do good Men comply with the ſecret Intimations of God's Holy Spirit, but, from a friendly Viſitor now and then, he vouchſafes to come down and dwell with them; the Comfort or Benefits of which are very great.

FOR the Spirit's thus inhabiting Men gives them a Title not only to God's Care and Providence, but, to an Inheritance of Sons, to a Participation of that unſpeakable Happineſs, with which himſelf is eternally happy. St. *Paul* makes this an aſſured Argument of our Reſurrection[a]: *If the Spirit of him that raiſed Jeſus from the Dead, dwell in you; he that raiſed up Chriſt*

[a] *Rom.* viii. 11.

Chriſt from the Dead, ſhall alſo quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you: And in all Ages God is preſent by his Holy Spirit to all good Men, by which they become *Temples of the Holy Ghoſt.* Serm. XLIII.

But this Inhabiting of the Holy Spirit in good Men, which we ſpeak of, is not to be underſtood, as if it gave Men the ſame Power, to do the ſame miraculous Works as were done by the Apoſtles; for this is not to be expected now, there being not the ſame Occaſion for it: All that we are to underſtand from it, is this, that though the Spirit of God doth not now work Miracles, yet he actuates the Hearts of good Men, and puſhes them forwards in all their virtuous Actions, ſtrengthens them in their Duty, and inflames their Reſolution and Zeal.

His Reſidence in them preſerves them ſo, that ill Examples ſhall not draw them aſide, nor Temptations prevail upon them; that the Proſperity and Grandeur of the World ſhall not debauch them, nor Afflictions and Calamities make them deſpair.

And

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AND beſides all this, he fills the Hearts of Men he inhabits with inexpreſſible Joy, giving a Sort of Foretaſte of that Happineſs they are to enjoy hereafter; the very Reliſh of which gives them ſuch Satisfaction, that they feel not the Troubles and Vexations, which may aſſault them below.

BUT after all this, if it ſhould be aſked, How comes it to paſs, that ſeveral good Men are never ſenſible of ſuch a Reſidence of the Holy Spirit in them; and further, that many good Men are not only without the Pretences to the Spirit, but many wicked Men lay Claim to it, and under that Pretence, do a great deal of Miſchief in the World? I anſwer, that as to ſome good Men being never ſenſible of the Reſidence of the Holy Spirit within them, it is evident, that God, in the Acts of his Grace, works gradually, according to the Fitneſs of the Subject to receive his Impreſſions; ſo that though he is always ready to beſtow his Spirit, yet he requires all due Qualifications before he confers it. As,

1. It is required before his receiving the Holy Spirit, that a Man be not only purged

purged from groſſer Pollutions, but that he be ſo pure, as to admit of no voluntary Sin; for thoſe that defile the Soul by Sin, make it incapable of receiving the Bleſſed Spirit. Serm. XLIII.

2. The Spirit of God requires an amiable, calm, and benign Frame of Spirit, and without it he will not be invited down to take his Reſidence with us; and before we can expect that God will beſtow this Favour upon us, we muſt beg it by ardent and importunate Prayer; for though, as our Saviour tells us, his heavenly Father bears an Affection for us, yet he will not give us the good Things we want of him, till we *aſk him.*

Now, ſince the Proportion of God's Holy Spirit is not intailed upon all the Children that God receives to Pardon; and ſince it is evident, that ſome who paſſionately deſire it, yet have an unhappy Temper that unfits them for the Entertainment of this heavenly Gueſt; and many others, whom God will mercifully accept in order to eternal Life, are not as yet raiſed to ſuch a Meaſure of Holineſs as to be capable of this Favour at preſent; it cannot ſeem

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ſtrange that ſuch ſhould remain Strangers to this moſt happy Privilege; nor can it be reaſonable, that their Want of the Experience of it ſhould be any Argument that there is no ſuch Thing.

As to that Objection, that many wicked Men lay Claim to it, and thereby do a great deal of Miſchief; I anſwer, that there are Rules, which will, if attended to, diſtinguiſh the Properties of God's Holy Spirit from any other Motion. As,

1. The Spirit of God never moves any Man, but in an Action or Courſe warrantable by the Word of God. Indeed, in former Times, before the Mind of God was delivered in Writing, there were frequent Intimations of his Pleaſure, by the Spirit of *Prophecy*, to ſupply that Defect; but then it is to be obſerved, that ſuch Interpoſitions were attended with miraculous Circumſtances: But now, thoſe miraculous Atteſtations being ceaſed, as well as the Reaſon of them, whatſoever pretends to God, and is contrary to the Holy Scripture, is an Illuſion of the Devil.

2. The Motions of the Holy Spirit, in comforting the Hearts of good Men, are rational

rational and accountable, never grieving those who have not first grieved it, or giving Joy and Consolation to the Minds of Men, but upon just Grounds, when there is Reason for it within their own Consciences. Serm. XLIII.

3. The Spirit of God, in all its Impressions, is gentle, sedate, and governable: Therefore, wherever Men, pretending to the Spirit, are raving and furious, and overturn all Order and Government; or whersoever such Men shall, under such Pretences, thrust themselves into the Ministry, or put the civil Magistrate out of Office, this is not the Work of God, but either the Devil, or the Effects of a distemper'd Brain.

Having answered these Questions, I proceed to exhort those, that by Repentance have saved their own Souls, that they would endeavour the Salvation of other Men. They know by sad Experience the deplorable Condition of a Sinner, and therefore they should awaken such into a just Sense of their Danger, and encourage them, by returning from their evil Courses, to try those Mercies of God, which they themselves

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ſelves have experienced to their Comfort. For, it is not only the Duty of the Miniſters of God's Word to warn Sinners, but it is alſo the Duty of every good Man; and proper Ways may be found out of doing this, without taking upon him to be a Preacher. They muſt take care that they *let their Light ſhine before Men, that they may ſee their good Works*: For nothing recommends like Example; it ſhews Men the Excellency, convinces them of the Neceſſity, and demonſtrates the Poſſibility of Virtue.

AND beſides Example, there are many Opportunities and Advantages, which good Men have, of propagating a Senſe of Piety and Religion; ſuch as the Authority of Parents, Influence of Benefactors, and the Bonds of Converſation; every one of which, a good Man will make uſeful to his Purpoſe.

AND to encourage good Men in this Employment, beſides the Honour it will be to them, to do the Work of God, and the Satisfaction it will bring to their own Conſcience, it will advance their own Glory and Happineſs hereafter. For *they that*

that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the Brightneſs of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever. SERM. XLIII.

But there is a peculiar Aptneſs in thoſe, who have been recovered and converted from a wicked Life, to inſtruct and adviſe others: They know by their own Experience, the Baits that allure Men to Sin, and the Follies and Perverſneſs that keep them in that unhappy State; they underſtand the Workings of the Paſſions, the Regret of Conſcience, and the Thoughts of Men in that Condition; and they are furniſhed with more Obſervations to make them ſerviceable to convert Sinners, and have more Compaſſion to apply and make uſe of their Experience.

Besides, ſuch Perſons, as from wicked Men, have become good, are ſtanding Examples of the Folly of Sin, and convincing Arguments of the Neceſſity of Converſion, and ſuch as awaken Men to conſider their own Station. For, to ſee a Man, from a Drunkard, to become ſober; from a Debauchee, to become chaſte; from Prophaneneſs, to become good; and from

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from Curſing and Swearing, to bleſs and pray; ſuch a Change muſt be a moſt convincing Argument of the Neceſſity of Repentance to all ſuch, as are yet in *the Bonds of Iniquity.*

AND to ſay no more, ſuch Men as are ſo changed, are ſtanding Monuments of the Divine Mercy, and the ſtrongeſt Arguments of the Poſſibility of recovering the greateſt Sinners, if they be not wanting to themſelves and will not chuſe their own Deſtruction. For they proclaim aloud, the Greatneſs of the Divine Goodneſs, and the Largeneſs of his Heart; as, on the other Hand, they upbraid the Sinner of Folly and Madneſs.

LET every one therefore, who hath taſted how gracious the Lord is, endeavour all that lies in his Power, to encourage the Sinner to forſake his Ways, and to return unto the Lord. This is the greateſt Good they can poſſibly do them; and they themſelves, will in no wiſe loſe their Reward: For St. *James* ſays, *If any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, ſhall ſave a Soul*

Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a Multitude of Sins [a]. SERM. XLIII.

And let what I have ſaid perſuade you to Repentance and Amendment of Life; for if this be done, you may depend upon Forgiveneſs: But be vigilant and careful that your Repentance be ſincere, and your Obedience univerſal; for, in vain do Men hope to become Objects of God's Mercy, who live in the Breach of any one Commandment, or intend by a future Repentance to obſerve them all, and, in the mean Time, live in the Breach of that one: For, though the Goſpel is, indeed, a Covenant or Declaration of Grace and Mercy, yet it is alſo a *Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men*; and God is not obliged by his Mercy to forgive thoſe, that obey him but in Part, or may ſeem to repent when it is too late to renew their Obedience.

Let us, therefore, immediately ſet about this great Work; for the Experience of every Day affords us abundant Proofs, how uncertain our Lives are: A mortal

[a] *James* v. 19, 20.

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Diſeaſe may be already formed in our Bodies, and Thouſands of external Accidents are continually ready to deſtroy us; and if we ſhould be called to appear before God when the Guilt of actual Sin is upon us, we are loſt for ever. And, that this may not be the Caſe, is what no Man can be certain of; for we all ſtand upon the Brink of a Precipice, where the Ground is every Moment ſinking under our Feet; and no Caution nor Foreſight of ours can poſſibly prevent it: *For Man alſo*, as *Solomon* obſerves, *knoweth not his Time: As the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the Snare, ſo are the Sons of Men ſnared in an evil Time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them* [a].

AND St. *Paul* himſelf tells us, *Ye yourſelves know perfectly, that the Day of the Lord ſo cometh, as a Thief in the Night; for when they ſhall ſay, Peace and Safety, then ſudden Deſtruction cometh upon them, as Travail upon a Woman with Child; and they ſhall not eſcape: Therefore, let us not ſleep, as do others; but let us watch and be ſober.*

[a] *Eccleſ.* ix. 12.

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SERMON XLIV.

The FOLLY of Refuſing to embrace CHRIST's RELIGION.

MATT. xvi. 25, 26.

Whoſoever will ſave his Life, ſhall loſe it; and whoſoever will loſe his Life for my Sake, ſhall find it: For what is a Man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? Or, what ſhall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?

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OUR Bleſſed Saviour, finding his Diſciples alarmed upon his telling them, *that he muſt go to Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many Things of the Elders and Chief Prieſts and Scribes, and be killed and raiſed again the third Day*[a]; after he had ſeverely chid St. *Peter*, for endeavouring

[a] *Matt.* xvi. 21.

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ing to tempt him to diſobey the Will of his Father, by making him decline a Work ſo neceſſary for the Good of Men, proceeds [a] to acquaint his Diſciples, what they were to expect, if they deſigned to be his Followers; which we may paraphraſe in this Manner. Whoſoever will be my Follower, and profeſs my Name, muſt reſolve to deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs; he muſt reſolve to bear, with Patience, the Oppreſſions and Hardſhips he will meet with upon my Account, and undergo even Death itſelf with Chearfulneſs and Reſignation, according to my Example: Such Reſolutions will, undoubtedly, appear irrational to carnal Men; but yet, *whoſoever will* chuſe rather to *ſave his Life*, by denying me and my Goſpel, ſhall, in the End, certainly repent his Choice, *when I ſhall come in the Glory of my Father, with his holy Angels, and reward every Man according to his Work.* And on the contrary, *whoſoever* is ready and willing to *loſe his Life for my Sake, and the Goſpel's, ſhall find it*, either graciouſly preſerved here, or improved into Life eternal. How infinitely

[a] *Matt.* xvi. 24.

nitely preferable is ſuch a Reſolution, to the greateſt Advantages that can be propoſed or enjoyed by a Denial of me! *For what is a Man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? Or, what ſhall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* SERM. XLIV.

THESE Words in a very ſtrong Manner ſet before us, the Folly of a Man's refuſing to embrace Chriſt's Religion, becauſe attended with Perſecutions, when the Conſequence of ſuch a Refuſal is nothing leſs than the Loſs of eternal Life.

BUT as Men may, now, without ſuch Hazards and Dangers, profeſs Chriſtianity, I will conſider the Words in a more general Senſe, and ſhew, That every Thing, which a Sinner can propoſe to gain by being wicked, will not compenſate for what he ſhall loſe; and that a good Man, ſuppoſing him to be unhappy here, is the only wiſe Man.

HAPPINESS, though too often miſtaken, is, undoubtedly, the real Purſuit of all Men. And, as the Sinner would have us to believe him to be the only wiſe Perſon, by not ſuffering himſelf to be cheated, as he terms it, out of the preſent Gratifica-

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tions, by a ſuperſtitious Hope of enjoying future; let us examine his Pretences, and ſee whether he is not miſtaken in his Account of Pleaſures.

BEFORE we can be happy in the Opinion of ſuch Men, it is neceſſary that we be under no Reſtraint, but have a free Liberty of indulging our Paſſions, and gratifying every Appetite, as often as they demand Enjoyment.

BUT theſe ſenſual Pleaſures, whatever Happineſs they may be thought to give, are very ſhort and unſatisfactory; they bring a great deal of Labour and Uneaſineſs along with them, they are attended with perpetual Pain and Trouble, and at laſt end in Remorſe and Anguiſh of Spirit.

ASK the Debauchee, who hath been roving about in the Paths of forbidden Pleaſures; and he will ſhew you by the Catalogue of the Diſtempers, that his Luſts and Intemperance have brought upon him, what a Gainer he hath been by his imprudent Choice, and how empty of Happineſs thoſe Pleaſures are, that are

purchaſed with the Loſs of Innocence and Virtue. SERM. XLIV.

IF there ſhould be now and then a Man, that is ſo loſt to all Senſe of Shame, as to glory in his Folly, and to make a Mock at Sin; yet, the Generality of Sinners, at one Time or other, confeſs the Truth, and ingenuouſly own, that they are not Gainers by their Follies; and wiſh with all their Hearts they could retreat, and get clear of the Slavery of being ſubject to their own vile Paſſions. And what a miſerable Situation is this, for a Man to be commanded by every fooliſh Luſt, and to be hurried on to commit ſuch Things, as are a Shame and Diſgrace to human Nature?

ALL this is evidently manifeſt, with regard to the Debauchee; and it will be found no leſs true of other Sinners, who are as much diſappointed in their Purſuit of Happineſs, as the Debauchee.

RICHES and Honour are the Things, that vicious Men generally ſet their Hearts upon, and place their Happineſs in: But, if we conſider them thoroughly, we ſhall

SERM. XLIV. not wonder that they are diſappointed in their Expectations from them.

RICHES, indeed, at firſt Appearance, ſeem to be able to do every Thing, and procure whatſoever we want: And in the Poſſeſſion of good Men, they are often the Means and Inſtruments of promoting their Happineſs, by providing for their real Wants, and furniſhing them with great Opportunities of doing many good and merciful Actions to thoſe, who are in Neceſſity and Diſtreſs. But, when they are in the Hands of vicious Men, and have been procured by unjuſt and wicked Courſes, they do not bring that Happineſs along with them, that the World imagines.

FOR human Happineſs depends upon many Things beſides Riches; and, therefore, be a Man ever ſo wealthy, yet, if he wants the other Ingredients of Happineſs, he will infallibly be miſerable.

ANXIETY of Mind, Guilt of Conſcience, the Imperiouſneſs of Mens Paſſions, are not to be removed by the Poſſeſſion of all the Univerſe; and therefore, could we ſuppoſe a Sinner to be actually Maſter of the whole World, yet he would not be a Jot the happier

happier Man, while he was at Variance with his own Mind: Nothing but a Conſciouſneſs of our own Innocence, and virtuous Inclinations, can make us happy; and, if we be poſſeſſed of them, we ſhall certainly be ſo. SERM. XLIV.

BUT, if we could ſuppoſe, that a bad Man had got the better of his Conſcience, and could keep all Things huſh within; yet, in the Midſt of all his Greatneſs, he would not be able to ſecure himſelf from that juſt Contempt and Scorn, that he will meet with from all wiſe and ſober Men; which, in Spite of his Superiority, will gall and mortify him extremely.

So alſo, the Honours of the World, that bad Men are induſtrious to procure, even at the Purchaſe of every Thing, that ought to have been dear and ſacred to them, will certainly diſappoint them; and they ſhall find, that the Aim of the Ambitious is only Folly and Madneſs. True Honour is that Eſteem and Reputation, that ariſes to a Man from his real Worth, Excellency, and Goodneſs: Every Thing elſe, for which Men are honoured, deſerves rather Diſpraiſe than Glory, and will be loſt, while the

SERM. XLIV. the Virtues of good Men ſhall ſtand by them, and render them truly illuſtrious.

THESE Conſiderations are ſufficient to ſhew us the Folly of Sin, from the natural Inconveniences that attend it; but, when to this we add, that through this Men make themſelves odious to God, and that the End of theſe Things is eternal Death, nothing more need be ſaid to prove the Folly of Sin, and the Madneſs of thoſe who run into its Embraces.

ON the contrary, the good Man is in every Situation of Life happy. His Belief and Truſt in God's Providence, is no Bar or Diſadvantage to his temporal Affairs; but gives him Spirit and Reſolution in the Proſecution of them; knowing that he is in the Favour and under the Protection of that Almighty Being, who is always willing and moſt able to ſupport him: Whilſt he, who either diſbelieves or diſregards Religion, who lives in a continual Contempt of God, and an habitual Profanation of his holy Laws, is under great Uneaſineſs and Diſtraction of Mind; his Fears and his Paſſions are continually at Variance;

ance; and, as long as *the Houſe is thus divided againſt itſelf, it cannot ſtand.* SERM. XLIV.

THE good Man's Juſtice, alſo, and Righteouſneſs in his Dealings with Men, gets him the Honour and Eſteem of all that know him, and have to do with him; while, on the contrary, the Injuſtice, Oppreſſions and Uncharitableneſs of the Wicked, not only make them odious and abhorred by all the World, but treaſure up for them eternal Deſtruction hereafter.

THE Charity, alſo, and Benevolence, that the good Man exerciſes towards his Fellow-Creatures, draw upon him the good Wiſhes and Bleſſings of every one, that hath the leaſt Knowledge of, or Acquaintance with him; while the unchriſtian and inexorable Diſpoſition of the Wicked, meets with nothing but the ill Wiſhes of Mankind, who hate them for their Cruelty and Want of Compaſſion, and rejoice when any Misfortune and Calamity lights upon them.

BUT further: Let us ſuppoſe the good Man labouring under the Preſſures of Poverty, or any other unhappy Circumſtances; yet,

SERM. XLIV. yet, even in this Caſe, his Condition is infinitely more eligible than the other's.

As to *Poverty*; howſoever afflicting it may be, yet when a Man is conſcious, that he hath not brought it upon himſelf by his own Follies and Extravagancies, it is not ſuch a Misfortune, as it may appear to a worldly Mind.

AND when a Man conſiders with himſelf, that he hath taken no indirect and wicked Courſes to better his Condition, he feels ſuch a Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, as is ſuperior to the Joy that the greateſt Fortune in the World can give a Man, who hath collected it by unjuſt and diſhoneſt Actions.

Now, ſuch a Comfort alleviates the Preſſures of Want, and makes a good Man bear with Content what God's Providence hath been pleaſed to lay upon him; conſoling himſelf with this Reflection, that he is one of thoſe, who, though *they are poor in this World, yet are rich in Faith and Heirs of the Kingdom, which God hath promiſed to them that love him.*

WHEREAS, whatſoever the moſt affluent Fortune can adminiſter to wicked Men, is

insipid, for Want of that inward Peace and Content, that the good Man feels. Their guilty Consciences pall their Appetites in the Midst of their Plenty; and the Remembrance of the unjust Ways they have taken to amass this Fortune, and of the many Families they have ruined to procure it, sinks their Spirits, and makes every Thing, they have been labouring to enjoy, tasteless and loathsome. SERM. XLIV.

BUT further: Let us suppose a good Man groaning under other Sorts of Afflictions; yet, even then, he enjoys great Comfort and Consolation, by reflecting, that these are the Trials, by which God is pleased to prove his Integrity; and that *these light Afflictions will work for him a more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* For true and unfeigned Goodness cannot be overcome by any outward Calamity; there is an inward Joy, a secret and inexpressible Delight in the Breasts of good Men, that never leaves them, let their outward Circumstances be ever so unhappy: Which is such a Stay and Support to them under their Sufferings, as makes them equal, nay, superior, to the greatest Calamities of Life.

BUT

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BUT at the Hour of Death, a Seaſon in which we ſtand in Need of the greateſt Comfort, then ſhall the good Man feel and enjoy the Fruits of his Labour: Then *ſhall he lift up his Head with Joy, becauſe his Redemption draweth near*; for *the Work of Righteouſneſs*, as the Prophet ſays, *ſhall be Peace, and the Effect of Righteouſneſs, Quietneſs and Aſſurance for ever*[a].

THE Reflection on a well ſpent Life will clear up the melancholy Horrors of that gloomy Seaſon, and a conſcious Innocency brighten the dark Proſpect before us. It will revive our fainting Spirits, when all that the World can offer will ſtand us in no Stead, and baniſh thoſe unhappy Apprehenſions, that we can no otherwiſe get clear of.

BUT with the Wicked it is not ſo. The Approach of Death to them is a Seaſon the moſt dreadful. The Terror of the Almighty is upon them, who have lived in a continual Neglect of his Laws; and the Remembrance of thoſe Sins, which they ſo inſolently committed in Defiance of his Juſtice, will alarm their trembling, departing Souls.

THAT

[a] *Iſaiah* xxii. 17.

THAT Hope and Reliance upon God, which is then ſo comfortable to good Men, who *by patient Continuance in well doing have ſought for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality*, can adminiſter nothing to bad Men, but a fearful Expectation of Judgment for their former Iniquities, when the Lord ſhall appear to *execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of their ungodly Deeds, which they have ungodly committed.* SERM. XLIV.

BUT the Conſciouſneſs that a Man hath ſincerely endeavoured to keep the Commandments of God, will give him great Conſolation, when he is walking *through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*; and the glorious Proſpect before him, of a bleſſed Immortality, will make him deſire *to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt.*

AND if the Caſe will certainly be thus, when we come to leave the World, let us ſuffer theſe Conſiderations to prevail upon us now; and let us avoid thoſe Works of Sin, which we then ſhall heartily wiſh we had never committed. If we act any Thing againſt our worldly Intereſt, we are ſure to be aſhamed of it, and never fail to condemn our-

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ourſelves for our Imprudence: And is our eternal Intereſt of ſo low a Concern as to be overlooked by us? Or do we think it a greater Reflection upon us, to do a weak, than a ſinful Action? If we do, we ſhall have another Senſe of Things, when the Pleaſures of Sin are paſt, and our Souls going to take Poſſeſſion of our everlaſting Inheritance of Shame and Sorrow, which we have purchaſed by our own Folly.

THE Terrors of the Lord are ſo great, that one would think there was no Occaſion to perſuade Men to be virtuous, and that a rational Creature would take it as an Affront done to his Underſtanding, to be put in Mind of that, which his Reaſon muſt tell him, was his greateſt Wiſdom to do: Yet ſo irrational are we, that we have Need of the ſevereſt Threatnings to keep us within the Circle of our Duty, from which we are ſo apt to ſtray upon the leaſt ſinful Provocation.

BUT let us bravely reſiſt and conquer the Temptations, that our ſpiritual Enemy lays in our Way; and let not our Reaſon ſubmit to the giddy Guidance of our Appetites and Affections.

No

No Man wants a faithful Monitor to direct him to do what is right: We have all a perfect Knowledge of our Duty, which is written in too ſtrong a Character to be effaced; and every Breach of it is attended with Remorſe and Self-Condemnation, every Sin we commit makes us ſo much out of Humour with ourſelves, the Reflection of it is ungrateful, and we get rid of it, as we do of an unwelcome Viſitor, as ſoon as we can. SERM. XLIV.

ON the contrary, every good Action, which a Man does, gives him Pleaſure; he cannot help eſteeming himſelf for it, and applauding his Judgment and Underſtanding. And what a happy State is this, to have a Man in Friendſhip with himſelf, to have all quiet and eaſy within, and to have his Conſcience approve his Doings!

IF there were no other Reward of Virtue, than that Peace of Mind, that attends it, every wiſe Man would make it his Choice: But when Godlineſs hath not only the Promiſe of this Life, but of that which is to come; when God hath given his Word, *that thoſe that have done Good, ſhall go into everlaſting Life*; what an

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Encouragement is this to us, to behave ourselves soberly in all Godliness of Living, that we may be Partakers of those heavenly Promises!

LET me, therefore, intreat you, that you *present yourselves an holy and acceptable Sacrifice to God*, and so live, as to be thought *worthy of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. Suffer not yourselves to be carried away by the Allurements of Sin; but remember, that God can and will punish wicked Men, and their Punishment will be everlasting.

REFLECT and meditate seriously on these Things; and God grant, that we may have the Grace to withstand the Temptations of the World, the Flesh and the Devil; and with pure Hearts and Minds, to follow him the only true God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XLV.

On the SACRAMENT.

PART I.

LUKE xxii. 19.

This do in Remembrance of me.

OUR Bleſſed Saviour, knowing that the Time was come, when he was to be offered up for the Sins of Mankind, aſſembles his Diſciples together to eat the Paſſover; and in perpetual Memory of his laying down his Life for them, and the Benefits purchaſed by it, inſtitutes a new *Paſchal Supper*; in which all Chriſtians were to celebrate his Goodneſs to them, *who gave himſelf an Offering for us, that he might bring us to God.* SERM. XLV.

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MY Buſineſs, therefore, from this Paſſage of Scripture ſhall be, to conſider the *Nature, End* and *Deſign* of this holy Ordinance, that you may be the better directed how to partake of it worthily, and receive thoſe Benefits, which the ſincere Communicant is aſſured of obtaining by a due Performance of it.

As to the *Nature* of it, this is to be learned from thoſe Paſſages of Scripture, where Chriſt himſelf inſtituted this holy Ordinance, particularly in the Context: *And he ſaid unto them, With Deſire I have deſired to eat this Paſſover with you, before I ſuffer. For I ſay unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And he took the Cup, and gave Thanks, and ſaid, Take this, and divide it among yourſelves. For I ſay unto you, I will not drink of the Fruit of the Vine, until the Kingdom of God ſhall come. And he took Bread, and gave Thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, ſaying, This is my Body which is given for you; this do in Remembrance of me: Likewiſe alſo the Cup after Supper, ſaying, This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood, which is ſhed for you*[a].

FROM

[a] *Luke* xxii. 15—20.

FROM this Paſſage and ſeveral others in the New Teſtament, it is eaſy to ſee, that our Lord's Intention was, that the Bread here appointed to be broken, and the Wine to be poured out, was to remind us, how his Body was broken, and his Blood ſhed for us: Or, as our *Catechiſm* expreſſeth it, *for the continual Remembrance of the Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt, and of the Benefits which we receive thereby*; and not, as the Church of *Rome* would have us abſurdly believe, that the Bread and Wine, here offered, are really changed into the Body and Blood of Chriſt: An Opinion ſo monſtrous, that nothing but Force and Violence can ſupport it! It is the greateſt Inſult that can be offered to human Reaſon, and muſt render Religion ridiculous, by making it aſſert the Neceſſity of believing ſuch Things, as deſtroy the Foundation of all Knowledge, our Underſtanding and Senſes. SERM. XLV.

BUT, if any ſuch Thing could be, it would then not be a Commemoration of the Sacrifice once offered upon the Croſs, but a Taking away the Memory of that, by offering perpetually new ones. And then muſt Chriſt *often have ſuffered ſince*

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the Foundation of the World; whereas, *now, once in the End of the World hath he appeared, to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.* And as this Sacrament was inſtituted *to ſhew forth the Lord's Death till he come* a ſecond Time to Judgment, therefore ſuch a Repetition, made in the Sacrifice of Chriſt, muſt be uſeleſs; and, conſequently, ſuch a Change is not made, as the *Romaniſts* pretend.

NOR is there any better Foundation for that Notion, which ſome have maintained, of an unbloody Sacrifice in the Euchariſt; the Reaſons, on which it is built, being drawn from ſome miſtaken Paſſages of the Ancients, wherein they called the Sacrament an *unbloody Sacrifice:* For, where the Ancients call the Euchariſt an *unbloody Sacrifice*, it is only in a figurative Senſe, and means no more than a Sacrifice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving: And, in this Senſe, St. *Paul* exhorts us *to offer the Sacrifice of Praiſe to God continually*, that is, *the Fruit of our Lips, giving Thanks unto his Name*; and alſo, *To do good and communicate, forget not; for with ſuch Sacrifices God is well pleaſed.* This is all that the Ancients

Ancients underſtood by an unbloody Sacri- SERM. XLV.
fice. For, though we Chriſtians are excuſed from offering material Sacrifices, yet, by Way of Alluſion, we may be ſaid to offer up ſpiritual ones, which is *our reaſonable Service.* Our Incenſe muſt now be the Devotion of a fervent Spirit, and, inſtead of Bulls and Goats, we muſt ſacrifice our impure Deſires.

BUT not to entertain you any further with Controverſy, which is rather apt to ſour our Spirits than reform our Minds; the Nature of the bleſſed Sacrament will be the clearer diſcovered from the Ends of its Inſtitution.

1ſt, ONE great End is to repreſent to our Minds the Death and Paſſion of our Bleſſed Saviour.

CHRIST being about to leave the World, that we ſhould not forget him, was pleaſed to order this Occaſion of being preſent and converſing with us; that we might retain in our Memories the great Favours we have received from him, and be the more affected with them.

AND whoſoever preſerves in his Mind ſuch a Remembrance of Chriſt, as his Sa-

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viour and Redeemer, as one that died for him, that in him he might *have Redemption by his Blood*, whenſoever he ſees the Bread broken and the Wine poured out, cannot but contemplate how his Body was broken, and his Blood ſhed, for his Sake.

AND conſequently, the oftner we appear before his holy Table, the ſtronger and more vigorous will be the Impreſſions of theſe Things upon our Minds.

AND as the Inſtitution of the Sacrament is ſo very proper, by Means of viſible Signs, to imprint upon our Memories a more laſting Impreſſion and Remembrance of Chriſt's Death and Paſſion; ſo it is the Duty of every Perſon that believes in Chriſt, and is ſenſible of the Benefits he hath received from him, to celebrate this Remembrance of him: For what can any grateful Mind do leſs in Return for his Favours, than ſhew ſuch a kind Remembrance of him? And how can we pretend to be ſenſible of his Goodneſs, and not be deſirous to expreſs our Gratitude on all proper Occaſions?

To be backward in remembering ſuch a Friend, argues the baſeſt Ingratitude, or that we reject the Favour, and have no Senſe of

our

our Obligations to him: It is a direct Apoſtaſy, a Contempt of the Goſpel Mercies, and a Sort of excluding ourſelves from the Number of Chriſtians. SERM. XLV.

FOR every one that hath any grateful Senſe of the Mercies of God, and of that which our Saviour hath done and ſuffered for him, muſt think it his indiſpenſable Duty to do this in Remembrance of him. And this, not only now and then, but on every Occaſion that preſents itſelf. For as Chriſt deſigned that we ſhould do this only for our own Good, our *Intereſt* as well as *Duty* ſhould urge us on to a willing and chearful Obedience. If we hope to be ſaved by Chriſt, we muſt obſerve ſuch Means as he hath appointed for forwarding our Salvation; and as it evidently appears, that this Inſtitution was appointed as a Means for that End, to refuſe to do this, is not only a Sign of Diſreſpect to Chriſt, but a Proof that we have no Concern for our Salvation. They who profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians, and would take it as the greateſt Affront done to them not to eſteem them as ſuch, ſhould, one would think, be glad of any Means that would advance their everlaſting

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lasting Happiness; especially, considering how many the Temptations are, with which they are daily assaulted; how many Avocations and Hindrances they meet with, and how easily they are overcome by them, through the Infirmity of their Nature, and Violence of their Passions: Considering, I say, all this, one would think they should be glad of any Assistance in so great a Concern, and particularly so effectual an one as the Holy Sacrament undoubtedly is. For the oftner we receive this, the deeper will the good Impressions be made upon us, and such virtuous Dispositions of Mind raised in us, as will, by a due Improvement, bring forth Fruit unto eternal Life. So that he that is truly concerned for his Salvation, should omit no Opportunity of receiving this heavenly Banquet; but, for the same Reason that he is desirous of receiving it at all, will receive it as frequently as he can.

ONE of the Reasons, why Men, who pretend to be Christians, live so careless, and are so indifferent in Matters of Religion, is, because they seldom allow themselves Time and Leisure from worldly Affairs to meditate on it, and neglect those Means, which

which God hath appointed to awaken and withdraw their Minds from earthly Things: Whereas, would they but think ſeriouſly on the Favours they receive, as they ought to do, and meditate upon Chriſt's Death by partaking frequently of the Holy Communion, this would ſettle ſuch Reſolutions in them, as would have a right Influence upon their Lives, and fit them at laſt for eternal Glory. For the real Deſign of our Bleſſed Lord in inſtituting this Ceremony, was not, that he was ambitious of his own Glory, or was afraid that what he had done for us ſhould be forgotten without ſuch frequent Remembrances: No; all that he deſigned, was the Salvation of Mankind. The Sufferings he underwent to redeem us, cannot more ſtrongly affect us, than by ſuch a ſerious Remembrance of them; for by this we are put in Mind of the Love of God in ſending, and of our Saviour Chriſt in coming into the World for our Salvation.

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By reflecting on Chriſt's Death, and our Reconciliation with God for his Sake, we are put in Mind of the Heinouſneſs of Sin, how highly offenſive to God, and how greatly

SERM. XLV. greatly we are obliged to forſake it, if we expect any Favour from him.

BY this alſo we have a great Prevention from ſinning: For what more powerful Argument can there be to prevail with Men to forbear Sin, than to conſider, that our Lord ſhed his moſt precious Blood to redeem them from the Dominion and Puniſhment of it? And who can be ſo obdurate, as to run knowingly, and perverſely, into the Commiſſion of it, when, by breaking the Bread and pouring out the Wine, he ſees, as it were, his dying Saviour intreating him to avoid thoſe Sins, for which he ſuffered ſuch an ignominious Death?

2*dly*, ANOTHER End of the Sacrament is to renew the Covenant made with God by Baptiſm.

AT our Baptiſm we promiſed to renounce the World, the Fleſh and the Devil; to believe all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and to keep God's holy Will and Commandments: We made a ſolemn Vow to become the Servants of Chriſt, and to be obedient to him. But as the beſt of Men, by the natural Infirmities of human Nature, and by the Power of unforeſeen Temp-

Temptations, are too often overcome, and drawn in to commit Sin; therefore God, through his infinite Mercy, hath inſtituted another Sacrament, that we may reinſtate ourſelves into his Favour, and by eating and drinking at his Table, have Fellowſhip with him. But then, we muſt be careful to remember, that the bare Act of receiving the Lord's Supper will be of no Service to us, unleſs we perform the Conditions required on our Part, Repentance and Amendment of Life. For, though Chriſt was born, and died to take away the Guilt of Sin, it was only the Guilt of thoſe Sins, that are forſaken. We muſt remember, that *God will be ſanctified in them that come nigh him*; as he is holy himſelf, he expects that we ſhould *purify ourſelves, even as he is pure.* But, if we dare to adventure, without ſuch Reſolutions, the Partaking of this Feaſt, in Remembrance of the Sacrifice of Chriſt, will in no wiſe expiate our Sins; for no external Part of religious Worſhip can benefit any Perſon whomſoever, without actual Repentance and Amendment. We muſt, with firm Reſolutions of Obedience, *offer and*

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SERM. XLV. *present* ourſelves, our Souls and Bodies, *a reaſonable, holy and lively Sacrifice, unto God*: Otherwiſe, inſtead of doing this in Remembrance of Chriſt, we ſhall be found to do it in Contempt of him; which will bring down upon us that Condemnation, which our conſummate Ingratitude and Impudence deſerves.

3*dly*, By the Sacrament we have the comfortable Aſſurance of Pardon of Sin.

THIS Cup, ſays our Bleſſed Saviour, *is the New Teſtament in my Blood, which is ſhed for you, and for many, for the Remiſſion of Sins.* Through the Merit of this expiatory Sacrifice of Chriſt, the ſincere Penitent hath Acceſs with Confidence to the Throne of Grace, when he commemorates his Saviour's Sufferings in that ſolemn Manner, as he hath appointed; and he need never fear, upon his receiving devoutly the Holy Communion, but that *God will give him freely all Things, who ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; him, who upholds all Things by the Word of his Power, who is the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon.*

AFTER

AFTER ſuch an Inſtance as this, of God's good Will to Mankind, what may we not hope! Who, therefore, would upon ſlight Pretences abſent himſelf from this Holy Sacrament, where ſo much is to be obtained as the Pardon of our Sins; and deprive himſelf of that Benefit, which is not to be obtained any other Way? SERM. XLV.

4thly, ANOTHER End of the Holy Sacrament, is to unite us in the Bond of Affection and Love towards each other.

As it was the Deſign of the Goſpel of our Bleſſed Saviour to inſtitute a Religion, that was to reconcile us to God; ſo it was his Command, that we ſhould be reconciled one to another. *This*, ſays Chriſt, *is my Commandment, that ye love one another. This*, ſays St. *John, is the Meſſage which ye have heard from the Beginning, that ye ſhould love one another. By this*, ſays our Saviour, *ſhall all Men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have Love one to another.* He makes the loving one another, the Badge of our chriſtian Profeſſion. And, as this was our Bleſſed Maſter's *Command*, ſo it was his continual *Practice:* His whole Life was a perpetual Series of good Actions; we meet him, at every Turn, expreſſing

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preſſing his Tenderneſs and Compaſſion for Mankind, and performing ſome beneficial Miracle or other, to do them good. When the Multitudes appear before him, he heals their Diſtempers; when they are an hungered in attending to his Preaching, he feeds them, *leſt they ſhould faint by the Way*; and when the blind Men intreat him to have Mercy on them, we read, *he had Compaſſion on them, and touched their Eyes, and they ſaw.* There was no Infirmity to which he did not kindly adminiſter a Cure, and ſent every one from him with a Grant of thoſe Petitions, which were ſincerely deſired of him.

HIS Apoſtles, alſo, throughout all their Writings, urge the Neceſſity of Benevolence and Kindneſs to one another: *Above all Things*, ſays St. *Paul*, *have fervent Charity among yourſelves:* And in another Place, *Above all Things, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectneſs.*

FOR this End, Chriſt inſtituted the bleſſed Sacrament of his Body and Blood, that by this amazing Inſtance of his Love for us, we might, through Gratitude and in Imitation of him, do all the kind Offices, that are in our Power, to each other. And, in that

that moving Diſcourſe which he had with his Diſciples, a little before his Death, he inſiſts upon this affectionate Behaviour towards our Neighbours, and Fellow-Chriſtians, as the moſt agreeable Return we can make him: *This is my Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* SERM. XLV.

I MIGHT enforce the Practice of Benevolence, from the common Advantages, that flow from this heavenly Diſpoſition of Mind; as it preſerves us from thoſe violent and tumultuous Paſſions, that ruffle and teaze the Soul; as it makes a Man eaſy and happy in himſelf, and pleaſant and agreeable to other Men. But, it is not only the beſt Thing we can do, in Point of Prudence, but it is our Duty to love our Brethren: And by this we are to judge of ourſelves, whether we be really Chriſt's Diſciples or not. If we entertain any Grudge or Malice againſt any Man, we do not act in Conformity to the Rules we have received from Chriſt, which require Forgiveneſs on our Part, upon any ill Treatment we may have received from another. And the Apoſtle exhorts us *to forbear, and forgive one another, if any Man*

SERM. XLV. *hath a Quarrel againſt any; even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye: To be kind to one another; tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as God for Chriſt's Sake hath forgiven you.*

ONE would imagine, that there is no Perſon, that hath any Senſe of his own Unworthineſs, of the Goodneſs of God, and of that great Remiſſion by the Death of Chriſt, but muſt think himſelf obliged to mutual Love and Mercy, and be ready to be reconciled upon Injuries done him.

THIS Conſideration muſt engage him to the Practice of good Nature and Charity. For, what Diſpoſition can be ſo obdurate, that the Shedding of Chriſt's Blood for him, cannot ſoften into a charitable and compaſſionate Senſe? How can he forbear to love thoſe, for whom Chriſt ſhewed ſuch a tender Affection, and ſuffered ſo many Indignities and Tortures? Shall we not, in Obedience to his Commands, in Conformity to his Example, in grateful Return for the Favours we have received from him, diſcharge this moſt eaſy Duty towards his beloved Friends? Shall we not bear a petty Affront, nor forgive a ſmall

Injury

Injury to our Brother, when our Saviour bore the Pains of the Croſs to procure Remiſſion of our great and heinous Offences againſt God? And who dare preſume on Mercy and Favour himſelf, or hope, that *God for Chriſt's Sake* will forgive him, when he *for Chriſt's Sake* will not forgive his Neighbour? SERM. XLV.

CONSIDER this, ye that, like *Lamech*, are reſolved to be *revenged ſeventy and ſeven Fold*; and remember that, *if ye forgive not Men their Treſpaſſes, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your Treſpaſſes.* This is the Condition, upon which our own Sins are to be forgiven. For, howſoever exact and ſincere we may be in our Duty, and Worſhip of God, yet nothing will be accepted by him, as long as we remain in Rancour and Malice againſt our Neighbour. *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembereſt, that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee, leave thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way; firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.*

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THE Greatneſs of the Injury you have received, muſt by no Means be uſed as a Plea, not to forgive. For, if the Greatneſs and Number of Offences, were to be uſed by God, as a Reaſon not to forgive us, who then could be ſaved? For, how numberleſs are the Offences that we commit againſt him; how great and repeated are the Provocations, that we are every Day guilty of! And if God ſhould be as hard to forgive, as we are to paſs by Offences committed againſt us, miſerable indeed would be our Condition: But, God be praiſed, *his Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts as our Thoughts.*

LET us, therefore, in Imitation of our good and merciful Creator, be good and kind, and merciful to all Men; and, in Obedience to our Saviour's Command, let us *love our Enemies, bleſs them that curſe us, do Good to them that hate us, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe us; that we may be the Children of our Father which is in Heaven, who maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and the Unjuſt.*

IN

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IN a Word: *He that revengeth ſhall find Vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain his Sins. Forgive thy Neighbour that hath hurt thee, ſo ſhall thy Sins alſo be forgiven when thou prayeſt. One Man beareth Hatred againſt another, and doth he ſeek Pardon of the Lord? He ſheweth no Mercy to a Man like himſelf, and doth he aſk Forgiveneſs of his own Sins?*

Now, to God the Father, &c.

SERMON XLVI.

On the SACRAMENT.

PART II.

1 COR. xi. 38.

Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.

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HAVING considered the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I come next to consider the Qualifications that are necessary to a worthy Partaking of it.

WHAT gave Occasion to this Advice in the Text, and to the whole Discourse about the Sacrament in this Chapter, was a very great and impious Irregularity the *Corinthians* were guilty of, at the Time of their Celebration of it.

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IT was a Cuſtom among the *firſt Chriſtians*, before they received the Holy Communion, to have their *Love-Feaſts*, or *Feaſts of Charity*, in which, both the Rich and the Poor ſat down together, and eat of what was laid before them, in great Friendſhip and Sobriety. But, the *Corinthians* had profanely violated this good Cuſtom; for, inſtead of ſtaying for one another, that they might all partake of what was brought, particularly the Poor, who had nothing to eat, but what they received from the Charity of the Rich, they who were rich among them eat and drank to Exceſs, while the Poor had nothing to ſatisfy their Hunger.

THIS irregular Behaviour, the good Apoſtle ſeverely reprimands: *What*, ſays he, *have ye not Houſes to eat and to drink in*, if Need be, before you come? *Or deſpiſe ye* thoſe poor Chriſtians, who are Members of *the Church of God*, as well as you, *and put to Shame them that have not* what to eat or drink? To do thus, is contrary to what they ought to do, who aſſemble to eat the Lord's Supper, at the Inſtitution of which, Chriſt gave an equal Diſtribution of the ſacra-

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mental Bread to every one at the Table, in Token that he died equally for all; and he appointed them all to eat together of it, at one *Common Table*, in Remembrance of his Love and Goodneſs to them. *For I have receivea of the Lord, that which alſo I delivered to you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame Night in which he was betrayed, took Bread: And when he had given Thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, Take, eat; this is my Body, which is broken for you: This do in Remembrance of me. After the ſame Manner alſo he took the Cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in Remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come.* Now, *whoſoever ſhall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily*, as they do, who by this Practice exclude the Poor from their Part, and thwart the great Deſign of this Inſtitution, which was to ſhew Chriſt's equal Love to all, to whom he equally gave theſe Elements, *ſhall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.* And, as he that is thus guilty of a Violation of

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the Sacrament, will bring down God's Judgments upon him; for, *for this Cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep*; let every Man approve himſelf to his own Heart, as a good Chriſtian, and as one that comes to celebrate this Ordinance with a grateful Commemoration of the Love of Chriſt dying for him; and with true Charity and unfeigned Kindneſs to all thoſe, for whom he equally ſhed his Blood, and gave his Body to be broken. *Let a Man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.* SERM. XLVI.

BEFORE, therefore, we preſent ourſelves to be Partakers of the Holy Sacrament, we ſhould conſider what is the Nature and Importance of the Action we are going to do; namely, to be entertained by our Bleſſed Lord, in the beſt Manner, to receive the ſtrongeſt Teſtimonies of his Favour, to behold him, as it were, offering up himſelf for the Sins of the World.

AND, therefore, we ſhould bring along with us, ſuch Diſpoſitions as are proper for the Occaſion. Our Souls muſt be purified from all filthy and unclean Thoughts, from all tumultuous and perverſe Paſſions, from

all

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all Malice, Hatred, and Rancour: On the contrary, we ſhould adorn ourſelves with the Spirit of Meekneſs, Humility and Charity. Our Minds ſhould be affected with a reverential Awe and Diſtance; and every Thing removed from us, that may diſtract and diſcompoſe us, and deprive us of the Advantage of ſo bleſſed an Entertainment.

To which Purpoſe, we ſhould carefully examine ourſelves, conſider our Omiſſions and Commiſſions, and beg of God, that he would give us Grace to repent of our former Miſdeeds; and promiſe ſincere Obedience for the future.

AND, to perform all this with the greater Succeſs, we muſt be as particular as we can in this Search into our Ways, and ſum up all the aggravating Degrees and Circumſtances, that enhance the Guilt of our Sins, both with reſpect to God and Man.

WHEN we reflect upon our Sins that we have committed againſt God, it ſhould grieve us to find we have affronted, by our Folly and Diſobedience, ſo kind, ſo gracious a Being, to whom we owe all the Bleſſings and Comforts we enjoy, and who is continually pouring down his Favours

yours upon us. It ſhould exceedingly af- SERM. flict us, to find that we have been ſo un- XLVI. grateful to him, who hath made us what we are, and thereby put us into a Capacity of being eternally happy; that we have debaſed our Nature, by perpetual Enormities, even before the Beaſts that periſh.

AND further, when we reflect how poor and low the Motives were, that withdrew us from our Duty, and how unworthy the Purſuit and Entertainment of a rational Creature, we ſhould hate ourſelves, that we ran ſo greedily into the brutiſh Gratifications of our Senſes, and, as it were, ſold our *Birthright for a Diſh of Pottage*, forfeiting all our Happineſs for we ſcarce knew what, and exchanging the Pleaſures of Innocence for the Horrors of a guilty Mind.

To a Scrutiny and Examination into our Faults, muſt be joined Repentance and Amendment of Life. For Self-Examination is no otherwiſe neceſſary, than in order to Repentance, and if it does not produce that, might as well have been let alone. For our being ſenſible of the Greatneſs of our Guilt will not make us appear better

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better in the Sight of God, unleſs the Conſciouſneſs of it works in us a Reformation of Mind and Manners.

REPENTANCE, therefore, being the great End of Self-Examination, it is incumbent upon us to take Care, leſt we miſtake in our Notion of Repentance, and fancy that to be it, which in Reality is not. This we ſhould particularly beware of, becauſe we are apt to lay too great a Streſs upon the Validity of our Performances, and imagine we have done our Work, and are great Penitents, if we are a little out of Humour with our Sins, and make ſome faint Reſolutions of being better for the future.

To make our Repentance available to our Salvation, we muſt be inwardly grieved, that we have offended God by our Wickedneſs; we muſt confeſs our Sins before him, and confeſs them with real Sorrow and Trouble of Heart, and with ſtedfaſt Reſolutions never to commit the like again. For, it is a new Life only, that compleats our Repentance, and nothing ſhort of that, can give us any Aſſurance that we have repented.

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AND thus the Scriptures expreſs the Repentance of a Sinner: *If he turn from his Sin, and do that which is lawful and right: If the Wicked reſtore the Pledge, give again that he had robbed, and walk in the Statutes of Life, without committing Iniquity, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die.* SERM. XLVI.

BESIDES, our Repentance muſt proceed from a Love of God, as a moſt perfect and amiable Being; and from an Hatred of Sin, as it is an Offence againſt him; otherwiſe we ſhall be never the better for it. For, if it proceeds only from a Principle of Fear, as a Continuance in Sin may expoſe us to the Juſtice of God, we may abſtain from Sin, and yet never repent of it, and ſo loſe that Reward, which is promiſed only to true Repentance.

BUT further, we muſt not only *ceaſe to do Evil*, but *learn to do well:* Amendment of Life muſt follow our good Reſolutions, and be the Touch-Stone, to try whether our Sorrow for our Sins is real. For good Reſolutions are ſoon made; Men are apt to make fair Promiſes upon their Approach to the Sacrament: But we muſt be uniform in doing our Duty, and

SERM. XLVI. and not play the Saint this Week, and the Sinner the next. We must not suppose, that such a Preparation is sufficient to qualify us for a worthy receiving the Lord's Supper, and that more than ordinary Pains at that Time, is the only Thing needful.

INDEED, it is very proper, that we set apart some of our Time to examine our past Lives, in order to a sincere Repentance of all our Miscarriages, before we receive the Holy Communion; and accordingly, many excellent Books have been composed to assist the Devotion, and further the Self-Examination of those that stand in Need of them. But as most good Things have been abused, so too many People, into whose Hands these Books have fallen, have, it is to be feared, laid too great a Stress upon them, imagining, that, if they follow those Directions the Week before the Sacrament, and repeat over the Sins of Omission and Commission, which are methodically set down in those Books, in a serious and grave Manner, and say over regularly all those Prayers which are composed for the Morning and Evening of that Week, they are sufficiently qualified

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for a worthy Receiving the Lord's Supper. Whereas, on the contrary, as, without all this ſolemn Preparation, a Man that, upon Recollection through the whole Courſe of his Life, hath made it his ſincere Endeavour to live in the habitual Practice of Piety and Religion towards God, and of Charity and Mercy towards Men, may ſafely communicate; ſo, all this ſeeming regular Preparation will not a Whit the more qualify a Man, unleſs he is inwardly affected with a Senſe of his Miſcarriages, and is determined to forſake them. For, it is not the Repetition of ſuch a Number of Prayers that God values, it is an honeſt and contrite Heart; and whoſoever bringeth that with him, to his Table, bringeth Offerings enough. SERM. XLVI.

LET us not, therefore, think that we have done our Work, and duly qualified ourſelves for a Participation of the Lord's Supper, when we have finiſhed our Book; or that an Abſolution of our Sins follows an outward formal Confeſſion of them. This is to affront both the Knowledge and Wiſdom of God; to imagine, that he, who made the Eye, cannot ſee; and that he,

SERM. XLVI. he, who teacheth Man Knowledge, ſhall be ſo weak as to be pleaſed with ſuch outſide Obedience: And it is to undervalue the Sufferings and Death of our Bleſſed Saviour, to ſuppoſe he died for ſuch Men.

THE Church of *Rome* may dream, that many Repetitions of *Ave Marias*, and *Pater Noſters* will blot out their Sins in the Book of God; but let not us Proteſtants be ſo weak as to imagine, any Thing leſs than forſaking our Sins, and a thorough Amendment of Life, will entitle us to God's Favour, and to thoſe Benefits, that are conſequent to a worthy Receiving the Supper of the Lord. And to find out the better, whether our Reſolutions are real, we muſt ſeriouſly examine ourſelves, to know upon what Principles we act. As,

1. WHY have we altered our former Courſe of Life? Upon what Grounds and Reaſons do we proceed? Does the real Turpitude of Vice make us abhor it, as it is an Indignity to human Nature? Does the Conſideration alſo, that Sin is hateful to God, whom we are determined to oblige, make us reſolve to purify ourſelves from all Iniquity? Or does the Proſpect of any worldly

worldly Intereſt induce us to forſake our wicked Courſes, becauſe the World will eſteem us the more upon the Appearance of Religion, and our Fortunes be the ſooner made, by that Reputation, with which a ſeeming Strictneſs of Life, and a Regard to our Actions rewards us? If this be all we aim at, if the preſent Advantage be the only Hinge upon which our Actions turn, we muſt never expect any Favour from God, or think that he will ever reward us, whoſe Purſuit was not his Glory, but the Praiſe of Men. Theſe indeed may ſpeak, and think well of us too, by being deceived by this outward Sanctity; but God is not to be deceived, he knows our Thoughts afar off, and he is acquainted with every Motive of our Actions, and will ſeverely puniſh every Attempt to impoſe upon him. But, SERM. XLVI.

2. WHEN I am urging thus the Neceſſity of Self-Examination, I would not have you underſtand me, as if I intended to fix it peculiarly to the Sacrament, or imagined that it was more required in *that*, than any other religious Duty. It is true, there is no Time more porper for

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Examination, than when we approach the Lord's Table, there to commemorate his Death, and the Goodneſs of God to us, who was pleaſed to accept it as a Propitiation for our Sins; leſt we ſhould not be in ſuch a Diſpoſition as we ought to be in at that Time: Yet, let us conſider, that in whatſoever religious Duty we are engaged, we have to do with the ſame almighty and gracious Being; we are in the Preſence of the ſame infinite God, that ſees and knows our moſt ſecret Thoughts, and expects the ſame devout Behaviour, the like Diſtance and Reſpect; the ſame Purity of Mind; the ſame Abhorrence of Sin; the ſame ſincere Reſolutions of Amendment of Life, as we would be thought to have, and ſuch as we ought to have, at the Time of receiving the Sacrament.

FOR Inſtance: When we intreat him in our daily Prayers, that *he would have Mercy upon us, that he would forgive us our Iniquity*, and remit the Puniſhment due to our Sins, can we imagine, that he will hear our Supplications, unleſs the ſame Attention of Mind, the ſame Fervour,

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Importunity and Perſeverance, and the ſame Faith and Truſt in God recommend us to his Mercy, that we ſuppoſe neceſſary for the Sacrament? Can we think that God hath not the ſame Regard for Goodneſs? Or, that he is eaſier to be intreated at one Time, or at one Place than another? If theſe are your Thoughts, you are exceedingly miſtaken. For though you may come to Prayers, and join in the *daily Service of the Church*, with leſs Awe and Scruple, than when you partake of the Sacrament; yet, depend upon it, that the Perſon that prays unworthily, will be equally puniſhed with the unworthy Receiver of the Sacrament. For, ſuppoſe we were begging of God, that he would deliver us from any temporal Calamity, from ſome certain Affliction, or ſome ſudden Neceſſity that we labour under; are we not as much concerned to be in the ſame Temper of Mind, that the Sacrament requires of us? Without doubt we are, or God will not hear our Prayers, or relieve our Wants. SERM. XLVI.

THANKSGIVING, alſo, for Mercies received is an indiſpenſable Duty, as there is

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not a Moment of our Lives, but we are greatly indebted to God's Goodneſs for many Favours we actually receive from him. And, ought not this to be done with all the Devotion of our Souls, with all that real Affection, that an Heart inflamed with Gratitude can inſpire? And what, more than this, is it poſſible for the ſincereſt Chriſtian to do, when he receives the Sacrament? He can only thank God, with all the Sincerity of Soul, for Mercies received through Jeſus Chriſt, and beg of him to forgive him his Tranſgreſſions upon his unfeigned Repentance, joined with real Purpoſes of Amendment: And leſs than this will render both theſe religious Duties ineffectual, to promote the Ends for which they were deſigned.

For, as, when we are preſent at the Lord's Table, it is our Duty to be in ſuch a ſerious Temper of Mind, as becomes the Sacredneſs of thoſe Myſteries, which are exhibited to us, and with humble and contrite Hearts, to bewail thoſe Sins, which were the Occaſion of our Saviour's Sufferings, and reſolve to forſake hereafter, every Thing that is injurious and diſpleaſing to him; As it is our Duty to love him for the

the Favours here vouchſafed to us, and expreſs our Unworthineſs of ſuch Grace and Favour from him; and in Obedience to his Will, and in Imitation of his Example, to love all Mankind, and to do them all the Good that lies in our Power: SERM. XLVI.

So, when we are upon our Knees, either in Private or Publick, and pouring out our Supplications before him, the ſame Qualifications are neceſſary, if we expect to have them accepted by him. Our Minds muſt be ſerious and devout, our Hearts muſt be humble and contrite; the Senſe of our Sins muſt make us earneſt for Forgiveneſs, and our Reſolutions of future Amendment ſincere: The Senſe of God's Goodneſs to us, and his continual Favours poured down upon us, muſt make us love him, and willing and ready to forgive all Mankind, and take all Opportunities to do them Good, to aſſiſt them in their Wants, and pour Oil into their Wounds: Otherwiſe, our Prayers will be an Abomination to him. For, as *David* ſays, *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear my Prayer.*

So alſo, as, after we have received the Holy Sacrament, we are obliged to appear

SERM. XLVI.

in the Practice and Increaſe of every Thing that is good, to evidence a real Amendment of Life, and an Improvement in all Virtue and Godlineſs of Living, as a Proof that we have worthily received the Holy Sacrament, and deſigned to perform thoſe Vows and Engagements we then made; as we are obliged, I ſay, to do all this, to ſhew ourſelves in ſome Meaſure worthy of that Honour, which God hath vouchſafed us, in admitting us to ſo near an Approach to himſelf:

So, after our Converſe with God in Prayer, we are to manifeſt the Sincerity of our Promiſes to him, and Reſolutions of living better, in the Practice and Increaſe of every Thing that is good, in having a Regard to his Commandments, and in avoiding all thoſe Things, which we know are offenſive to him: Otherwiſe, we ſhall be ſo far from being better for having prayed, that it will add to our Condemnation, to have prayed ſo often without thoſe Qualifications, that are neceſſary to make our Prayers acceptable to him.

THUS we ſee, that in whatſoever religious Duty we are engaged, whether it be

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our daily Prayers or the Sacrament, the same Preparation is required to render our Service acceptable to God. SERM. XLVI.

THEREFORE, let us not suppose, because we pray to God in his Temple, oftner than we receive the Sacrament, that our Crime is less, if we are cool and indifferent in our Devotions to him; or, that we are guilty of a blacker Sin, in unworthily receiving, because our doing it seldomer is apt to raise in us a greater Dread and Awe: For, in both Duties, we are to behave with the same Reverence and Distance, and to remove every Thing from our Thoughts, that may distract or discompose us. And, if we are in such a pious Disposition of Mind when we pray, or receive the Sacrament, we may have humble Confidence towards God, and have Access to the Throne of Grace, through Christ, *whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation* for us, *through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, through the Forbearance of God.*

To whom be all Praise for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XLVII.

On the SACRAMENT.

PART III.

JOHN xv. 14.

Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

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HAVING considered the Nature and End of the Holy Sacrament, together with the Qualifications that are required to our worthily receiving it,

I PROCEED, in the next Place, to enforce the *Necessity* of our partaking of it, and expose the Vanity of every Excuse, that may be offered as a Reason for our absenting from it.

THE *Necessity* of our receiving the blessed Sacrament arises,

1*st*. FROM its being a positive Command of our Blessed Lord; as is evident in the Words of the Institution, which expressly

expreſly enjoin us to do it in Remembrance of him: *And he took the Cup, and gave Thanks, and ſaid, Take this, and divide it among yourſelves; for I ſay unto you, I will not drink of the Fruit of the Vine, until the Kingdom of God ſhall come. And he took Bread, and gave Thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, ſaying, This is my Body, which is given for you; this do in Remembrance of me.* SERM. XLVII.

Now, if our Saviour's Commands are at all obligatory upon us, if we really believe in Chriſt, and acknowledge that he came from God, and is of God; we can aſſign no one good Reaſon, that will ſatisfy our Conſcience, why we do not obey him in this Particular.

IF we are Chriſtians, we muſt neceſſarily think ourſelves obliged to obey every Commandment that Chriſt hath given us; otherwiſe, if we offend in one Point, we are guilty of all; that is, if we pretend to chuſe which we ſhall obey, and which neglect, we can have no ſincere Belief, that we are obliged to obey him in any one, but as it is agreeable to our Will and Pleaſure: For, if we think ourſelves obliged

SERM. XLVII. to obey him in one Command, the ſame Reaſon, that weighs with us to obey him in that, will carry us to obey him in every other: Becauſe it is the ſame Authority, that commands the one, as the other: *For, he that ſaid, Do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill.*

BESIDES, there is the ſtrongeſt Reaſon in the World for us, as Chriſtians, to obey Chriſt in *doing this*; becauſe it was appointed in Remembrance of the greateſt Favour we ever received: *For, as often as we eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, we do ſhew forth the Lord's Death till he come.* By this, we have Aſſurance of the Pardon of our Sins, of being reſtored to the Favour of God, and being put in a State of Salvation. Now, if we brand that Man with Ingratitude, that forgets, or is unthankful for the Civilities and good Turns we have done him, and mark him out as a Perſon worthy of every one's Diſeſteem; with much more Juſtice may we be called ungrateful and worthleſs Creatures, who, after ſuch great Favours received from Chriſt, neglect to appear before him, and to do that, which he, when

he was going to die for us, expreſly commanded us to do in Remembrance of him. But, SERM. XLVII.

2dly, THE Neceſſity of receiving the Sacrament, will appear from the great Advantages that ariſe to us, from a frequent Participation thereof.

THIS World is full of Temptations; there is hardly any Thing that is the Object of our Senſes, but ſome Way or other is enticing us from doing our Duty; we want all the Aſſiſtance poſſible to be able to withſtand their Power; and we certainly fall, when we depend entirely upon our own Strength. If, therefore, we would be ſafe, we muſt apply to that which was appointed to make us more than Conquerors. And of all religious Duties, there are none more proper to aſſiſt us, than a frequent Participation of the Holy Communion; which, when received in a pious and devout Manner, increaſes our Faith in God, ſtrengthens our Hope and Confidence in him, and enlarges our Charity to all Mankind. But as theſe are the good Effects of communicating, ſo, by Conſequence, a Neglect of it muſt weaken our Faith and Confidence in God, diminiſh

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miniſh our Charity to our Neighbour, and make us cool and indifferent in every other Part of our Duty. For, how can we expect God's Aſſiſtance to enable us to perform our Duty, or hope that Chriſt will intercede for us, that our Iniquities may be forgiven, who neglect the very Thing, that he commanded as a Proof of our Belief in him?

3*dly*, THERE is another Argument made uſe of, to evince the Obligation we lie under to receive the Holy Sacrament, taken from a Conſideration of the Penalties that the *Jews* incurred, if they neglected to eat the Paſſover: *The Man*, ſays God, *that is clean, and is not in a Journey, and forbeareth to keep the Paſſover; even the ſame Soul ſhall be cut off from his People, becauſe he brought not the Offering of the Lord, in his appointed Seaſon: That Man ſhall bear his Sin*[a].

WE ſee here a very ſevere Threatning denounced, no leſs an one, than an entire *Cutting off from his People*, againſt the Man that did not keep that Feaſt, as it was appointed. And can we think, that, if

[a] *Numb.* ix. 13.

if we neglect to partake of the bleſſed Sacrament, of which the Paſſover was only a Type, we ſhall be leſs puniſhed than the *Jews* were, upon their Diſobedience? Without Doubt, we ſhall not. God expects to be obeyed in all his Commands: And, if the *Jews*, by their Neglect to eat the Paſſover, which was appointed only to keep in Remembrance their Deliverance from *Egypt*, were ſo greatly puniſhed; what Puniſhment may not the Chriſtian expect, who neglects attending the Holy Communion, in which there is a Remembrance of a greater Deliverance than from an *Egyptian* Slavery, even a Deliverance from eternal Death and Miſery? SERM. XLVII.

As, therefore, it is ſo greatly our Intereſt, as well as our Duty, to receive the bleſſed Sacrament; let us embrace every Opportunity of Communicating; let us follow the good Examples of the firſt Diſciples, who *continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles Doctrine and Fellowſhip, and in Breaking of Bread, and in Prayers*[a].

IN a Word: If we would avoid the juſt Anger of God; if we have a Regard for what

[a] *Acts* ii. 42.

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what our Saviour hath done for us, and value our own Salvation; we ſhould take every Opportunity of Receiving, and ſee the great Neceſſity of being conſtant Communicants.

IF Excuſes are pretended, they are vain: For no Buſineſs can be ſo neceſſary, as doing our Duty to God, nor any Conſideration ſo valuable, as the Salvation of our Souls.

BUT, as there are a great many pretended Excuſes, and as there are many Perſons, whoſe Minds are oppreſſed with great Terrors about Receiving the Sacrament, and frightened with ſtrong Apprehenſions of being unworthy to partake of it, I will conſider ſome of their Excuſes, and ſhew how vain and groundleſs they are, when offered as a Reaſon for their abſenting from the Altar.

1. SOME Men make their *Unworthineſs* a Reaſon for their not Communicating. But this Pretence will by no Means excuſe them: For, it is their Duty to be in ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind as God requires; and, if they be not, this *Unworthineſs* will be imputed to them as their *Fault*,

Fault, and not their *Excuſe*; for, by this Reaſon they might excuſe themſelves from the Practice of any other Command: They might pretend never to forgive, becauſe they are of a revengeful Diſpoſition; and to rob and cheat, becauſe they have a great Inclination to it. But this, I preſume, no one would accept as an Excuſe; or forgive a Robber, becauſe he had a great Bias towards Thieving. Nor will God forgive any Unworthineſs, that is in Mens own Power to amend. For, if they are not worthy, from whence does this Unworthineſs proceed? Have they done all that lies in their Power to be better? Can they lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and ſay they have done their beſt, and have prayed to God that he would aſſiſt their Weakneſs, and confirm by his Grace the good Reſolutions they have begun? If they can ſay this, they are worthy to receive: If not, this Unfitneſs will be imputed as their Crime; becauſe they were commanded to *eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup*; and they muſt not increaſe their Unworthineſs by tranſgreſſing their Duty. SERM. XLVII.

BESIDES,

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BESIDES, this Complaint of Unworthineſs may eaſily be cured. It is only a Fondneſs for their Sins, that makes Men unwilling to part with them. And I believe, that, if they, who make the Pretence of their Unworthineſs for not Receiving, would ſay the Truth, they would own, that it is ſome favourite Vice that they are unwilling to part with, that makes them abſent themſelves from the Table of the Lord. They will not, for Example, forgive their Enemies, or leave off their looſe and profligate Courſe of Life; and, therefore, will rather venture to diſoblige God, than part with their Vices.

THIS is the true Reaſon of their Unworthineſs; but this is ſuch an Unworthineſs, that a conſiderate Man would correct as faſt as poſſible, leſt Death ſhould call him at an Hour he thinks not of, and conſign him over to that State, where the Excuſes he now makes, for abſenting from the Sacrament, will not be admitted as a Plea for his Diſobedience to the Commands of his Bleſſed Saviour; but he ſhall be puniſhed for refuſing God's Invitations to his Table, and for thoſe Sins, which he

he impiouſly in this World alledged as a Reaſon for his Diſobedience. SERM. XLVII.

2. OTHERS there are, who would excuſe their Abſence from the Sacrament, from their Fears of incurring that *Damnation*, which is in Scripture denounced againſt the *unworthy Receiver*.

BUT theſe Men are alſo very much to blame: For, if it be the Duty of every Chriſtian to receive the Lord's Supper, they can by no Means be excuſed from it: And, if to receive it unworthily be ſo dangerous, they ought to take Care to receive it as they ought to do. And how that may be done, we have the Direction of St. *Paul*, in theſe Words: *Let a Man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.* This is the Way, by which all Unworthineſs may be removed; and to do this, is not ſo difficult, as melancholy-diſpoſed Perſons are apt to imagine.

FOR if, upon Examination, their Minds are in a devout Diſpoſition, and if, in the general Courſe of their Lives, they have made it their ſincere Endeavours to obey the Commandments of God, they need not

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be under ſuch Terrors they ſo much complain of. For a Life thus led will make them always fit to communicate; and they may be ever ſaid to be ſincerely religious, though they may not always be equally ſenſible of it to their own Satisfaction: For ſometimes there will be a Want of Affection, and uneaſy and even irreligious Thoughts may ſteal into the Mind; and yet, for all this, a Man may not be the leſs qualified for religious Duties. For theſe ſinful Thoughts, which offer themſelves involuntarily to the Imagination, if a Man gives them no Entertainment, by any Pleaſure or Delight taken in them, can no more pollute the Man, than his ſeeing any wicked Thing done, makes him the Author of it.

LET not, therefore, ſuch Men defer coming to the Lord's Table, upon Account of their *unreaſonable Scruples*; for if they are conſcious to themſelves, that they have ſincerely endeavoured to keep the Commandments of God, and to do thoſe Things which pleaſe him, they are ſufficiently qualified at all Times to receive the Holy Sacrament.

IF they are terrified at this Text, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himſelf*; I anſwer, that they cannot now be guilty of that Fault, againſt which that *Damnation* was denounced; nor was that *Damnation* any other than *temporal Puniſhments*, which God inflicted upon thoſe, who eat and drank to Exceſs. SERM. XLVII.

BUT further: To encourage ſuch Men, who ſincerely endeavour to do their Duty, and yet lie under theſe Fears; I muſt obſerve, that theſe very Terrors upon their Minds, are a Sign that they are not unworthy to receive, but have a Senſe of God and their Duty to him. And, therefore, let the Obligation they are under, to obey God's poſitive Commands, overcome thoſe Terrors, the giving Way to which, makes them actually guilty of a Breach of that Duty, they fondly imagine they are not worthy of performing.

BUT, ſuppoſing the worſt, that they have really made themſelves unworthy of receiving the Holy Sacrament, by any habitual Wickedneſs; yet, even in this Caſe, their abſtaining from the Altar will not

SERM. XLVII. make their Condition the better. They are expreſly obliged to receive worthily; and if they do not, they cannot eſcape that Condemnation, which is due to their Unworthineſs, whether they receive the Sacrament, or not.

3. ANOTHER Pretence, that ſome make for abſtaining from the Table of the Lord, is, for Fear of Communicating with wicked Men, who oftentimes preſent themſelves before God, without that *wedding Garment* that is required of them.

BUT this muſt proceed either from *Ignorance*, or *Cenſoriouſneſs*, mixed with *Hypocriſy*: For what, in the Name of God, is it to us, that another Man is not ſo well prepared as he ought to be? It is himſelf that muſt anſwer for his own Faults; and if he will not do his Duty, we muſt nevertheleſs do ours. It is commanded us to communicate; and if we be better than they, we ſhould pray for them, and not, with the Pride of the *Phariſee*, bid them *ſtand off, for I am holier than thou.*

BESIDES, how do we know they are ſo bad as reported? Or, if we be ſure of that, how can we ſay they have not repented?

Perhaps,

Perhaps, ſome effectual, though unknown Sorrow for their Sins, may have made them reſolve to be better Men; and if ſo, no Step could be more prudent, than to preſent themſelves before God at his Altar; where, by the Death of our Bleſſed Redeemer, there commemorated, they are aſſured of the Pardon of their Sins, of being reconciled to God upon true Repentance, and of the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, to enable them to fulfil their good Reſolutions in the moſt effectual Manner. SERM. XLVII.

THIS, I ſay, may be the Caſe: Their Hearts may have been converted by ſome ſudden Influence, unknown to us; and, therefore, we ſhould think the beſt, hoping that no Man would be ſo wicked, as openly to mock God in the moſt ſolemn of all religious Actions.

BUT ſuppoſing, that they be bad Men; it belongs not to private Chriſtians to withdraw themſelves from the Sacrament upon that Account. It is the Office of the Governors of the Church to mark out ſuch, and it is Time enough, after the Cenſures of the Church are pronounced againſt them, to ſeparate themſelves from them.

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BUT till then, every private Chriſtian's Buſineſs is to mind his own Duty, and not abſent himſelf from the Communion, becauſe bad Men may be preſent; eſpecially, ſince Communicating with them does no more make them Partakers of their Sins, or Unworthineſs, than the reſt of the Diſciples were infected by Communicating with *Judas*. It is impoſſible, while Men live in this World, for the Bad and Good not to meet together on many Occaſions; and all that is then required of good Men, is, not to be Partakers with them in their Iniquities, to *have no Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs*. But, for Fear of having any Thing to do with them, to withdraw ourſelves from doing that which is our indiſpenſable Duty to do, is to be guilty ourſelves of breaking God's poſitive Commands, while we take upon us to blame others for not performing them worthily.

NOTHING now remains, but to intreat you, if you deſire to be called Chriſtians, to keep yourſelves in a conſtant Preparation for the Holy Communion. The Goodneſs and Love of Chriſt, manifeſted to Mankind,

Mankind, is here repreſented to us; and one would think it ſhould raiſe in us great Pleaſure, to commemorate the Favours we have received from him: One would imagine, that the glorious Conqueſt that Chriſt made over Sin and the Grave, and the wonderful Manner, by which he hath opened the Gates of Heaven for us, would make us fond of taking every Opportunity of remembering them. SERM. XLVII.

To be backward, after ſuch Favours received, ſhews an Heart greatly tinctured with *Infidelity*, or the blackeſt *Ingratitude*. For, if a Man ſeriouſly believes all the Things, that Chriſt hath done for him, let him aſk himſelf, if no Returns are to be made to him for his Goodneſs; no Obedience, by doing Things, that, when he was going to lay down his Life for us, he commanded to be done in Remembrance of him? Let us, therefore, be at all Times ready to acknowledge the Love of Chriſt to us, in his Redeeming us from everlaſting Deſtruction; and with the moſt fervent Deſire beg of God, that he would work in us thoſe holy and heavenly Diſpoſitions, that may render us fit to appear before

SERM. XLVII. him; that he would ſtrengthen our Faith, perfect our Repentance, confirm our Reſolutions of Amendment, and enlarge our Charity towards all Men.

IN a Word: If we are convinced of what Chriſt hath done for us, let us never forget his Love and Goodneſs; let our whole Lives be ſpent in his Service, and our Mouths be perpetually employed in his Praiſe. Methinks, if we had a juſt Eſteem for theſe Things, we ſhould cry out with holy *David*, *O! when ſhall I come and appear before thee? My Soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord, and my Fleſh crieth out for the living God*[a].

THE Angels in Heaven are repreſented as continually ſinging *Hallelujahs* to the *Lamb, that was ſlain* for our Redemption, though they are not Partakers of it: They are repreſented as falling down and worſhipping him, and declaring him *worthy to receive Bleſſing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power*: And ſhall we Chriſtians be ſo little moved with a Senſe of his Goodneſs, as to refuſe this Act of Worſhip and Reſpect, which God himſelf hath appointed?

LET

[a] *Pſalm* lxxxiv. 2.

LET this, my Beloved in Chriſt Jeſus, be never laid to our Charge; but let us beg of God, that he would aſſiſt us by his Grace, that we may be conſtant Partakers of this ſacred Ordinance, and continue in that holy Fellowſhip, and do all ſuch Works as he hath prepared for us to walk in, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.* SERM. XLVII.

SER-

SERMON XLVIII.

On a FUTURE JUDGMENT.

ACTS xvii. 31.

He hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs.

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THERE is nothing that affects Men with greater Awe and Dread, than the Belief of a future Judgment: It is the principal Motive of Virtue and Piety, and the greateſt Reſtraint and Check upon Vice and Wickedneſs; without the Aſſiſtance of which, the Sinews of Government would become feeble, and the Bonds of Society weak. This ſuppoſes the Being of a God, and a Providence: For, if there be no God, there could be no Providence in this World, nor Judgment in the next;

next; but if there be, then it neceſſarily follows, that there muſt be Rewards and Puniſhments in a Life to come. SERM. XLVIII.

IF we appeal to Scripture for a Proof of this, we have as clear an Evidence as poſſible: For God declares and confirms it in many Places; and, the more to awaken Men to a Conſideration of it, he is ſaid to have appointed a ſet Time for it; he hath foretold, who ſhall be our Judge; with what Pomp and Retinue he ſhall come attended; what Meaſures he ſhall proceed by, and what ſhall be the Circumſtances of that grand Solemnity.

BUT, as this Proof may not be allowed by ſome, who would be thought more ſagacious and wiſe than other Men, I will ſhew, that there is all the Reaſon to believe it, that any prudent and conſiderate Man can deſire.

IF we conſider our real *Intereſt*, we muſt certainly allow, that it would be much better, that there ſhould be another World, and a Judgment to come. For, that we are mortal, needs no Proof; and, if we were ſure that Death would put

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put an End to us *entirely*, the Thoughts of it muſt be very uncomfortable; and the more ſo, according as we had been happy and proſperous in this World. How bitter muſt the Meditation on Death be to a Man, that is at Reſt in his Poſſeſſions; to think that he muſt go down to the Grave, have a Veil drawn over his Glory, and an End put to all his Pleaſures and Enjoyments!

Now, this is the very Caſe of the Perſon, who diſbelieves another Life; he deprives himſelf of the greateſt Support againſt the Calamities of this World: For, it muſt certainly be very unhappy to live in a perpetual Fear of dying; and, when dead, to be as if he had never lived.

Indeed, if we had no more Underſtanding than the Beaſts, it would have ſignified but little, that we had died like them: But for Men, who are endowed with Reaſon and Reflection, to have all their Knowledge and Wiſdom, all their Hopes and Deſigns buried in the Grave, without any Proſpect of living in another State, muſt be a ſad Conſideration; ſufficient

ficient to damp all their Study and Industry, all Care and Culture of themſelves: For, why ſhould we endeavour to live like Men, if we muſt die like Beaſts? Or, why take Pains to increaſe in Knowledge and Virtue, when, by our Improvement in them, we ſhall only increaſe our Sorrows? SERM. XLVIII.

IF it ſhould be anſwered to this, that the Terrors of a future Judgment make a Man's Life equally as unhappy, as the Thoughts of dying like a Beaſt; I obſerve, that no Man needs be under this Uneaſineſs whilſt he is alive; becauſe, by the Grace of God, we have it in our Power to be good, and ſo qualified, that we may give a good Account of ourſelves in that Day of the Lord. For, God is too good to ſeek the Ruin of his Creatures, by making them eternally miſerable. If that was his Deſign, there would be no Need of the Solemnity of a Day of Judgment, ſince he could have deſtroyed us whenever he pleaſed: But, God is too great to have any little Ends to ſerve; and, therefore, we have no Reaſon to ſuſpect him: He created us at firſt to make us happy; and therefore, there can

be

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be nothing of Envy or Cruelty in any of his Counsels about us: Of which we may be assured by this, that, in all that God demands from us, as the Terms and Conditions of our Happiness, there is nothing severe and discouraging, nothing harsh or impossible to be done, as if God had designed to abridge our Liberty, or break our Spirits, or oppress our Powers.

Indeed, we must expect to meet with some Difficulties; otherwise, Religion would have no Excellency in it, nor could we have either the Glory, or the Pleasure, in obtaining our End, if it were won without Sweat and Labour: All which, a wise Man would undergo with the greatest Chearfulness, considering the vast Promises of Religion, and what it commands or imposes.

This being premised, I come to shew the moral Proofs of a future Judgment,

I. By considering Man as an accountable Creature.

II. From the Nature and Attributes of God.

III.

III. From that unequal Providence, that appears in this World.

I. The first Proof of a future Judgment, may be gathered from considering Man as an accountable Creature.

That Man is indued with a large and comprehensive Mind, not confined to the mere Objects of his Senses, but capable of taking in and comprehending Things to come, as well as those that are past or present, we are all sensible of; and that we do not only consider the absolute Nature of Things, as they lie before us, but can compare them together, and by that Means deduce proper Inferences, and make just Conclusions.

We have also a Freedom of Will, by which we do not only move ourselves when we please, but can apply ourselves to this or that Object, or act or not act, as our Humour or Inclination directs.

And to make us yet more capable of being judged, we have a Law within us, by which we are to govern and direct ourselves;

Serm. XLVIII. ſelves; by the Light of which, we have not only a Capacity of apprehending and judging of *natural Good and Evil*, but we find ourſelves obliged to have regard to *ſomething* beſides our Bodies: And, above all this, we have not only a ſpeculative Apprehenſion of *moral Good and Evil*, but we are condemned by *our own Conſciences*, when we do not practiſe according to that Notion we have of it. If we have done well and virtuouſly, we feel an unſpeakable Satisfaction in our own Minds; and, on the contrary, if we have ſaid or done any baſe or wicked Thing, we cannot help upbraiding, accuſing, and condemning ourſelves. And, that this Conſcience is more than the Effects of Education, appears from the Influence it hath over all Men, who find it ſo deeply implanted in their Minds, that the moſt different Cuſtom or Education cannot efface or blot it out; which proves it to be the Senſe of Nature, and a certain Preſage in us, of a future Judgment.

To all which we may add, in the laſt Place, that the Soul is ſo far from being impaired by the natural Decays of the Body, that

that it grows more ſtrong and vigorous by Age, Exerciſe and Experience; conſequently it is independent of the Body, and will ſurvive, when that is no more. SERM. XLVIII.

From all which it is evident, that Men are accountable Creatures, and are capable of being judged hereafter.

II. The next Proof of a future Judgment ariſes from the Nature of God, and his Attributes.

The moſt common and natural Notion of God, is, that he is of infinite Power, Wiſdom, Juſtice and Goodneſs: By which Perfections he is not only capable of judging the World, if he pleaſes, but they give us the greateſt Aſſurance that he will do it: For, if he be infinitely wiſe, he muſt know how we act; and if he be of infinite Power, he can puniſh us when we do Evil, and reward us when we do well; and if he be juſt and good, it cannot but be expected from him, that he will ſet right all thoſe Irregularities that now appear in the World, which ſeem to caſt a Doubt upon his Juſtice and Goodneſs in the Government of it.

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WE have, therefore, no Reaſon to fear, but that he will do all this in another World; and, that *he hath appointed a Day, wherein he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs.* Which brings me to my laſt Particular,

III. To ſhew the Certainty of a future Judgment, from that Providence which God exerciſes at preſent over the World.

THIS is a natural Inference from the other. For, if there be a Judgment to come, there muſt be a *provident Eye* over the World, in order to it, that God may perfectly underſtand the Actions of Men, and know what deſerves Puniſhment, or merits Reward. Otherwiſe, he cannot be ſaid to be a Judge. And on the other Side, if there be a Providence here, and God obſerves the Behaviour of Men, it implies his Deſign to reward or puniſh them, according to their different Carriage and Actions.

Now, that God does exerciſe ſuch a Providence over the World, will appear,

1*ſt*, FROM Prophecy. SERM. XLVIII.
2*dly*, FROM Miracles.
3*dly*, FROM frequent Inſtances of a divine Interpoſition in the Affairs of the World.

1*ſt*, FROM Prophecy.

PROPHECY is an undeniable Proof of a Providence; for it is certain, that whoſoever is able to foretel Things before they are, muſt ſee through all the Series of Cauſes, that produce ſuch Effects: And, that there have been Predictions of Things, long before they came to paſs, hath been the Belief of all Nations, and is remarkably evident in the Holy Scriptures. The Prophecies recorded in the Old Teſtament, are very many, and ſo well known, that there is no Occaſion, but barely to mention ſome of them, which are the moſt remarkable; as, *that* of the Slavery of the Children of *Iſrael* in the Land of *Egypt*, and their miraculous Deliverance from it; the Captivity of *Babylon*, which was foretold ſeventy Years before it was fulfilled, as well as the Duration of it, which was exactly anſwered in the Event; and, to name no more, the Deſtruction of *Babylon* itſelf, which was

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one of the moſt unlikely Events that could happen, eſpecially in ſo ſhort a Time, conſidering the Wealth and Grandeur of that once great and flouriſhing City: Yet, even the minuteſt Particular of the Prophecy was fulfilled, in the moſt exact and ſurpriſing Manner; as may be ſeen by comparing the Prophecies of *Iſaiah* and *Jeremiah*, relating to *Babylon*, with thoſe antient Hiſtorians, who have treated and wrote about the Deſtruction of that Place. Now, theſe Prophecies were all wrote, and in being, as may be proved, before the Event ſo remarkably fulfilled them. And, as it is impoſſible, that human Wit ſhould ever imagine or hit upon ſuch Things, with ſuch punctual Exactneſs, they muſt certainly proceed from God, and are a Proof of his providential Care and Government of the World.

2*dly*, The next Proof of a Providence may be drawn from *Miracles*.

A Miracle is ſomething that is performed, which is either above the Power of natural Cauſes to do, or, at leaſt, contrary to their eſtabliſhed Courſe and Order.

der. Now, if ſuch a Thing ever happened, it muſt be by the Interpoſition of ſome ſuperior Cauſe: For, it is neither intelligible, that Nature ſhould go out of Courſe of itſelf; or, if out of Courſe, how it ſhould ever be able to recover itſelf into its former Order again. SERM. XLVIII.

AND, that there have been ſuch extraordinary Things, cannot be doubted without great Ignorance, or denied without the utmoſt Aſſurance.

3*dly*, THE third Proof for a *future Judgment*, ariſes from a frequent *Interpoſition* of *Providence* in the Affairs of the World.

THERE never was any great Thing accompliſhed in the World, without the viſible Aſſiſtance of Providence. What a ſtanding Evidence of Providence is the *Preſervation of the Holy Scriptures*, through ſo many Ages of Barbariſm and Corruption? How miraculous is the Preſervation of the Chriſtian Religion againſt all the Malice of its Opponents, and the Succeſs of the Apoſtles in Preaching it to all Nations, though its Doctrines were ſo contrary to the Paſſions and Inclinations of Men?

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Men? How many Examples have we of great wicked Men, who have been tortured by their own Conſciences, when no body elſe hath been able to hurt them? And, how many good Men have been wonderfully ſupported under ſuch Preſſures and Afflictions as would ſink other Men? Which can be reſolved into nothing but a ſecret Influence of Providence ſupporting the one, and galling the other. How often, alſo, have Sins, that have been committed in the moſt ſecret and private Manner, been moſt wonderfully diſcovered, and the juſt Vengeance of God, repaid to wicked Men their cruel and barbarous Behaviour to, and Treatment of others?

INDEED, it cannot be denied, but that ſometimes the beſt of Men are oppreſſed and harraſſed by others, while wicked Men are very happy and proſperous: But this is no Argument, that the Univerſe is not under the Direction of God. For, if Things were conſtantly managed one Way without any Variation; if good Men were always rewarded, and bad Men puniſhed in this World, it would take away the Free-

Freedom of our Choice, and make our virtuous Actions not ſo meritorious: Whereas, an Intermixture of Proſperity and Adverſity in the Fortunes of good Men, is more advantageous to them, than a more regular and conſtant Providence would be. For, as a continued Courſe of Proſperity is too apt to tempt Men to be wanton and careleſs, ſo a perpetual Series of Misfortunes would be as apt to ſink and depreſs their Spirits; but a middle Way in their Condition, balances them on both Sides, and keeps them in a more even Temper. SERM. XLVIII.

BESIDES, by this *unequal Diſpenſation* of Providence we arrive at a more certain Aſſurance of a future Judgment. For, if the divine Majeſty ſhould never puniſh the Wicked in this World, we could have no Reaſon to expect, that he would puniſh them in the next: And, on the contrary, if he ſo conſtantly interpoſed, as to leave no Irregularity unpuniſhed, nor any virtuous Action unrewarded, there would be no Need of a Day of Judgment. Whereas, by ſometimes rewarding the Good here,

we

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we are ſatisfied, that he regards what we do; and yet, by not puniſhing many Enormities now, that he hath cut out Work for a Day of Judgment. But,

THOUGH God does ſometimes thus deal with Men, yet, at other Times he treads in ſuch plain and direct Paths, that we may eaſily follow him. No one, that reads the Old Teſtament, can be ignorant of God's particular Providence over the *Jews*, who were ſure to be proſperous, while they obeyed his Laws; and unhappy and miſerable, when they deſerted his Altars to ſerve other Gods. So that *that People* were placed as a Light on a Hill, and were an illuſtrious Inſtance to the World, of that great Truth we are now diſcourſing of.

Is, then, a future Judgment ſo fairly to be deduced from Reaſon? Let us prepare ourſelves to appear before our great Judge. The Time is drawing on apace, when our Lord ſhall come in the Glory of his Father, and of his holy Angels; and, then, all thoſe who have behaved themſelves well, who have lived virtuouſly and piouſly, will look up with Joy and Comfort to ſee their Saviour

Saviour become their Judge, and to find an End of their Labours, in a Reward of their Services. But, SERM. XLVIII.

ON the other Hand, the Workers of Iniquity, who have lived in all Manner of Wickedneſs, ſhall call upon the Rocks and Mountains to hide them *from the Face of him that ſitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb.* For, then, no Tears will avail, no Excuſes will be admitted, no Appeal be allowed, no Refuge found, nor any Reprieve to be hoped for: But they ſhall hear that dreadful Sentence, *Depart, ye Curſed, into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

To delay the Preparation of ourſelves for this great Day, is unaccountable Folly; and a due Preparation for it will make us rather hope and wiſh for it than fear it. For, it is only a Judgment after Death, that makes Death ſo terrible; but mere Death can never ſhake our Minds or diſcompoſe our Thoughts, if we are ſatisfied that all will be well after it. And, what a happy Condition is it, to be out of the Reach of the King of Terrors,

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and to see Light through that gloomy Vault of the Grave!

BUT when I am talking of Preparation, you are not to understand, that a Man is to live every Day, as if it was to be his last; which is more *devout* than *judicious*: For, as God hath placed us in a World, where we are to provide many Necessaries for Life, he cannot expect, that we should apply ourselves every Moment to the Affairs of another World, as if we were just going off this Stage, and solemnly preparing ourselves for an immediate Appearance at God's Tribunal. This is impossible to be done, and what God will not expect from us. Indeed, we ought to spend every Day well, and to be sure to do nothing we cannot answer to our Consciences; to be always advancing in Virtue, growing better and better, and doing something that may turn to Account another Day; and then comfortably to wait God's Time.

THIS is all that is required of us, for our Preparation against that great and terrible Day of the Lord: For, to be always

ways on our Knees, and in Acts of Devotion, is inconſiſtent with many other Duties of providing for our Families, and many other Offices that are incumbent upon us. And, therefore, we may reſt ſatisfied, that if, together with doing the ſeveral Duties of our different Profeſſions and Callings, we every Day improve in our ſpiritual Affairs, we ſhall find Favour with our kind and merciful Saviour and Judge. SERM. XLVIII.

Which, that we all may do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

FINIS.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM